

WHEN WOODY MET HARRY
Deconstructing adultery: Why do men do it?
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NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE
The secrets of the beauty business
MAGAZINE



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DALGLISH GOES ON A CHARM OFFENSIVE
The other side of Newcastle's Mr Dour
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THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 2 May 1998 70p (UK70p) No 3,600

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Today's news Policeman guilty of rape

A CLEVELAND police officer was yesterday found guilty of two rapes and one indecent assault. John Blott, 33, was also cleared of three charges of indecent assault after more than five hours of deliberation by the jury. He was remanded in custody until 15 May when pre-sentence reports will be submitted.
Page 3

Minister accused of expenses fiddle

Helen Liddell, the treasury minister, was under police investigation yesterday after an allegation of irregularities in her election expenses. The allegation concerned an undeclared donation. However, figures released by Labour yesterday showed that she had spent £4,572 on her campaign against a limit of £7,000.
Page 4

Sacking apology

THERESA Harrild, who won a sexual discrimination case against the English Cricket Board, has received an apology and "substantial sum", it was announced yesterday. The former Lord's receptionist won an industrial tribunal in March claiming she had been sacked after being forced to terminate her pregnancy.
Page 6

'Sue doctors' move

WOMEN who suffer illness or mental trauma after an abortion are to be encouraged to sue the doctors responsible for allowing the operation. Anti-abortion group Life said yesterday that it was setting up a free phone line to give women advice on their legal rights and persuade them to go to court in a new campaign to deter mothers-to-be from ending their pregnancies.
Page 7

Beetlemania's back

WITH its new Beetle, VW is striking gold. Beetlemania is upon the United States. For reasons that can only be guessed at - nostalgia for the old beetle of the Seventies, its look that is still bulbous but also sleek, or VW's inspired advertising campaign - the new Beetle is as sought-after in the US as the Viagra potency pill. It is so hot, there is already a black market for them.
Page 13

New slave trade

SLAVERY is emerging as an economic fact and a human outrage in the country that once followed Lenin but has now turned to building capitalism. It has been well known for some time that the Russian mafia tricks Slav women into slavery with the promise of lucrative work abroad. Now the same technique is being used on the territory of the former Soviet Union and is affecting not only prostitutes but also workers in a wide range of other industries.
Page 10

Business news

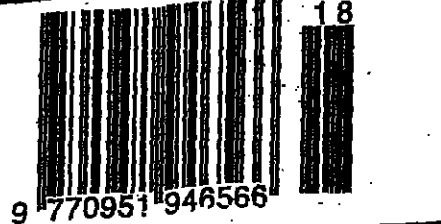
Industrial gloom

FRESH evidence of a downturn in manufacturing has all but ruled out a rise in interest rates next week. In the second gloomy survey of industry this week, the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply said manufacturing activity declined in April for the first time in almost two years.
Page 22

Sports news

Wenger's weekend

ARSENE Wenger, Arsenal's manager, is managing to retain an air of calm, despite facing the most important weekend of his season without Footballer of the Year Dennis Bergkamp. Arsenal know that victory in tomorrow's against Everton will bring them the Premiership title.
Page 22



Brown puts weight behind euro

By Colin Brown in Brussels

GORDON BROWN last night tried to stop international markets driving the pound to a new high on the eve of the historic launch of the euro, with reassurances that the single European currency would be a success. The Chancellor raised the prospects of Britain joining the euro early in the new millennium and came as Tony Blair made last minute efforts to stop the launch of the new currency being marred by a row over the presidency of the European Central Bank (ECB).

Jacques Santer, the president of the European Commission, declared it was no longer "if but when" Britain would join the euro. Mr Brown emphasised that Britain would not "take a leap in the dark" but the euro's success as a hard currency would meet one of the key tests for Britain's membership. The Chancellor described it as "the opening of a new chapter for Europe" but he said it was only the beginning because the EU had a high level objective of long-term stability on which economic success depends. "I am confident that progress has been made in all the areas that

matter for the success of the euro," said Mr Brown, who was also confident of eventually winning public support for Britain's entry. His upbeat message contradicted the Conservative leader William Hague's warning that the euro would be a soft currency and the formal locking of 11 currencies tomorrow will lead to a flight of money into sterling, inflating its value and hitting exports and jobs. The agreement of 11, led by France and Germany, at a heads of government summit today is a foregone conclusion and was due to be given final approval after a meeting of European finance

council ministers (Ecofin) last night in Brussels. As he arrived, Mr Brown said: "I heard politicians saying only a year ago this could never happen, that today's events were impossible. I think there has been remarkable progress in Europe in achieving budget discipline and greater long-term stability with economic reform." The Chancellor said there was agreement in Europe on Britain's agenda for creating employment and securing jobs - underlining his confidence that the single currency will provide the economic benefits that Britain will require before joining after a referendum, which he promised would be early in the next Parliament.

The Prime Minister flew to The Hague last night for talks with Wim Kok, the Dutch Prime Minister, in a last minute effort to broker a deal between France and Germany over their rival candidates for the ECB. Mr Blair spoke to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Jacques Chirac and may speak to Mr Kok again today but was said by Mr Brown to be making progress in seeking acceptance for Germany's preferred choice, Wim Duisenberg, the Dutch president of the European Monetary Institute, in the face of tough French bargaining for their candidate, Jean Claude Trichet, governor of the Bank of France. British ministers said the rules requiring an eight-year term could not be broken but a compromise was being negotiated possibly to allow Mr Duisenberg to retire after four years, leaving the French a four-year share. The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: "We think we can make progress, we think we can broker an agreement that will satisfy the requirements of the [Maastricht] treaty but it does remain difficult." Blair campaign, page 12



May ball's abridged version

A STUDENT being carried over Magdalen Bridge in Oxford yesterday after the traditional May Day gathering to hear the choir sing from the top of Magdalen College tower, writes Liam Gregoriadis. Police concerned about the strong currents in the River Cherwell had earlier shut the bridge to stop inebriated students jumping in, a May Day pastime that has also become a matter of concern to local authorities and welfare officers. The heavy police presence failed to discourage a motley assortment of bedraggled ball-goers, bemused tourists and early rising locals from assembling before first light. There were fears that some would try to force the police cordon but only one dinner-jacketed student toyed briefly with the idea of a dash through the lines until one of his group shouted: "Who wants to jump in the river, anyway. Let's go to the pub." Photograph: Tom Pilston

Paper pays for killer's memoirs

By Ian Burrell Home Affairs Correspondent

THE memoirs of a former IRA terrorist, who has admitted at least two murders and was given two life sentences, are to be serialised in the Daily Telegraph. His book, titled *The Informer*, earned him a large advance, reported to be £175,000, from Transworld Publishers. Mr O'Callaghan, 42, a former Sinn Féin councillor who joined the IRA at 15, pleaded guilty in 1990 to murdering Peter Flanagan, a Royal Ulster Constabulary detective, and Eva Martin, an Ulster Defence Regiment soldier, in 1974. After the killings, he changed his view of the IRA and became a valuable informer for the Garda. Since his release from prison, after serving only eight years of his sentence, he has campaigned for peace and become a respected authority on Northern Ireland affairs. Mr O'Callaghan was this week

arrested by the Garda in Dublin and questioned about matters, including the death of John Corcoran an IRA man and Garda informant, murdered in 1985. He was yesterday freed without charge. Transworld issued a statement yesterday describing Mr O'Callaghan as "an authority on the IRA and a working journalist" who had spent 20 years "working ceaselessly to destroy terrorism". His agent, Bill Hamilton, said: "He's a man who risked his life under the most dangerous circumstances to subvert terrorism and then handed himself in to prison in order to pay his debts." Confirming that the Daily Telegraph would be serialising the book this month, he said Mr O'Callaghan would be "coming absolutely clean" about his killings and his role in the IRA. The Daily Telegraph refused to comment. Earlier this week its editor, Charles Moore, wrote an article entitled: "Why we refused to serialise the story of Mary Bell." He wrote that Bell had not received any pardon for her crimes and "remains guilty". Instead the book, *Cries Unheard*, was published by the Times, which paid £40,000 for the serialisation rights. The author, Gitta Sereny paid Bell a sum, which unconfirmed reports put at £50,000, for her collaboration in the project. Yesterday the Attorney General, John Morris, said that after two days of investigation he could find no redress in the law for ordering Bell to repay the money.

Bonanza for 'club clique' as RAC is sold off

By Randeep Ramesh Transport Correspondent

THE ROYAL Automobile Club, Britain's oldest motoring organisation, is to be sold to an American company for £450m. And four MPs are among a "club clique" of RAC members set to receive a £35,000 windfall from the sale. The proposed buy-out must be approved by the 12,000 members of the RAC's plush Pall Mall club in a meeting next month. Among this exclusive group are Tory MPs Shaun Woodward and Peter Luff as well as the president of the Liberal Democrats Robert MacLennan and Labour MP Derek Wyatt, a former BSkyB executive. Anybody rushing to "carpetbag" is too late - even if they could get in. There is a six-month waiting list to use the Pall Mall facilities - believed to have the best Turkish baths in London - and a prospective member needs to be "recommended" by two current club users. But under its two-tier membership structure the 6m "members" of the rescue service - who contribute the bulk of the RAC's profits - will not benefit and do not need to be consulted about the sale. Contacted by *The Independent*, the MPs described the payments as "quite incredible". "I have done nothing to earn this. I find it all very doubtful," said Mr MacLennan, MP for Caithness, Sutherland and



The logo that means £35,000 for a select group of members

Easter Ross. "I have been a member of the club for about 10 years. Simply because it has a good swimming pool." Sean Woodward, MP for Witney and former director of communications, also joined for the "pool". "I have no objection to the demutualisation. What I want is the club to work," he said. Others set to receive the cash

bonuses are designer Paul Smith, former Formula One champion Damon Hill and journalist Sir Robin Day. The RAC board has been canvassing support for a switch from its mutual status. It has already received 6,700 replies from full members, of which "more than 90 per cent have been supportive". The sale is likely to go ahead later this year, after a formal show of hands at a meeting in June. Cendant, virtually unheard of in the UK, has just bought up the third largest motoring organisation, Green Flag. Its 3m members and the RAC's 5.8m will make the new motoring support service almost equal in size to the AA.

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A club whose name is worth £450m

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

THE remarkable rise and rise of the RAC continued yesterday. Founded by the prolific inventor Frederick Simms more than a century ago, it has risen to become a distinctly British marque at the end of the millennium. It is for its "brand" that US concern Cendant paid £450m. The American giant only last month gobbled up Britain's car parking empire and the nation's third largest motoring organisation Green Flag. Putting these elements together, Cendant will have now nearly more than 45 per cent of the breakdown market.

Industry insiders said the RAC sale was likely to be referred to the Office for Fair Trading as it would see two entities – the new RAC and AA – holding more than 90 per cent of market.

What many will also bemoan is the loss of another great British institution. Taking its cue from the conversion of major building societies to banks, the RAC decided to sell up. The reason, say its managers, is that it will be able to fund ambitious plans.

Executives at the RAC have long been concerned that the motoring organisation would not have the money to invest in new technology – such as electronic mapping – that it would need in the near future. As the motoring organisation makes only £10m profit on £250m of sales, it executives were never likely to be able to realise their dreams.

So feelers were put out 28 months ago – the proposed sale attracted much interest. More than 20 bidders from the UK and overseas expressed desire. But none could match the £450m laid on the table by Cendant.

When the RAC's motoring services pass into American hands, 12,000 full members of the club will get windfall payments of up to £35,000.



The RAC has come a long way since the 1950s (above) and life members now include Peter Luff MP (below left) and Richard Wilson

This nearly doubles the amount on offer from Jeffrey Rose, the RAC's former chairman. His final act was to write to all the full members saying that "professional advisers" had valued the stakes at "a sum of £20,000". None of this will be of concern to the 5.8m members of the RAC's breakdown service – who will get nothing in cash.

Full members of the club, for a £620 signing-on fee and another £600 a year, can swim in the central London RAC club or play golf at Woodcote Park country club, near Epsom, Surrey.

Under the board's plan they will see a 2,800 per cent increase in their investment.

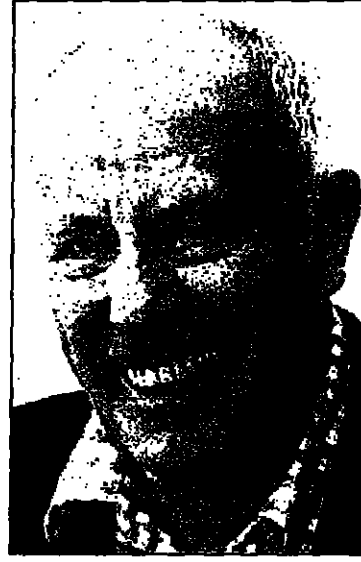
Among members expecting a windfall from the proposed takeover

are motor racing champions Nigel Mansell and the actor Richard Wilson.

The RAC insisted that its name would carry on and that there would be improved services – but no extra cash.

Members of the Pall Mall club will vote on the deal at the company's annual meeting next month and it is hoped the acquisition will be concluded by the end of the summer.

The Queen is the patron of the RAC, while the president is Prince Michael of Kent. Other full members include the gossip columnist Nigel Dempster, the former British Leyland car company chief Sir Michael Edwards and the former motor racing superstar Stirling Moss.



PC faces jail for raping two teenagers

By Jason Bennetto
and Benjamin Todd

A POLICE officer was convicted yesterday of "date" raping two teenagers and indecently assaulting a third woman after chatting them up while on duty.

In all three cases Constable John Blott, 33, tricked his victims into returning home with him on their first date, where he raped or molested them after his sexual advances where resisted.

The former professional footballer, who was said to regard himself as "gorgeous" and "some kind of sexual Olympian", now faces a long prison sentence and the sack. The officer from Cleveland Police was cleared by the jury at Leeds Crown Court of three charges of indecent assault and the judge ordered that one charge of rape and three indecent assaults be laid on file.

Blott's victims, all of whom were from Teesside area, trusted him because of his job and initially failed to report the attacks because they thought they would not be believed against the word of a policeman. He had denied all the charges.

His first victim was a 16-year-old college student he met in August 1993. He arranged a date and on the night told her he needed to drive to his home to pick something up. Once inside he forced her into the bedroom, pulled her to the floor and raped her. He then stood her up and raped her a second time.

In November 1994, Blott indecently assaulted an Inland Revenue worker, aged 22. He chatted up while on duty outside Middlesbrough town hall. He arranged to take her for a drink, but drove her to his home and showed her photographs of him with topless women. He pulled her to the

floor, fondled her breasts, and told her three times: "You know I'm going to rape you tonight." When she continued to resist his advances Blott masturbated in front of her and then watched football on television.

The second rape took place in March 1995, when Blott attacked an 18-year-old garage receptionist twice in his living room, leaving her "stunned, drained and utterly disgusted".

Blott of New Marske, near Redcar, Cleveland, boasted in interviews with police that he was a good looking man who had picked up hundreds of women during his 10 years with the Cleveland force.

"In uniform they seem to throw themselves at me. I could not count the number of girls I have gone out with. I must have slept with at least 300, so I'm hardly sex-starved," he said.

Blott was remanded in custody until 15 May for sentencing. He remained impassive in court as the judge told him he could expect a "substantial" jail term.

After the verdicts, Blott's solicitor, Simon Catterall, said: "He doesn't believe he has done anything wrong and he will take his denials to the grave."

Chief Inspector Dave Martin, from Cleveland Police, later said the detectives had spoken to hundreds of women during their inquiry into Blott's behaviour. Blott had "let the force down and disgraced the uniform that he wore", he said.

Rape convictions against police officers are rare. In 1995 Michael Seear, 25, was cleared of raping a fellow constable at a station section house after a New Year party. In December 1995, PC Adam Grice-Roberts, 32, was jailed for having unlawful sexual intercourse with a 15-year-old girl in his patrol car.

*Demon of the Internet cashes in his chips to make £33m fortune

IN THE NEWS

CLIFF STANFORD

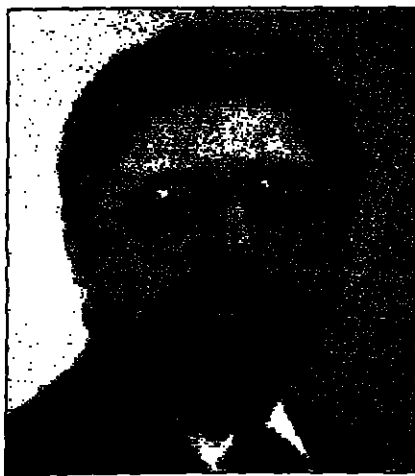
CLIFF Stanford has two passions: playing on the Internet and making money. After selling his company, Demon, he now has bagfuls of the latter – £33m, to be precise – and plenty of time to indulge in the former. writes Kathy Marks.

Demon, for those readers unacquainted with the key players in cyberspace, is Britain's largest provider of Internet access. Mr Stanford founded it in 1992 with £20,000 and sold it to Scottish Telecom yesterday for £66m, pocketing half himself.

Despite building a fortune on the back of the anorak brigade, Mr Stanford, 44, is clearly not just a computer nerd. He has a flair for business and a head for figures; he learnt book-keeping from his mother at the age of 10 and started out as an accountant.

But the key to Demon's success is the prescience with which, in the early 1990s, he anticipated the extraordinary explosion in demand for the Internet, hitherto the preserve of academics.

It was Mr Stanford's establishment of the first low-cost dial-up service – subscribers were offered access for just £10 a



Cliff Stanford: I like having money but it would be no fun to win it on the pools

month – that democratised the Net, opening it up to a whole generation of "techie". Operating out of cramped offices in north London, Demon had 1,000 subscribers within six months.

Mr Stanford grew up in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, where he helped his mother out with her book-keeping jobs and was running payrolls by the age of 15.

His entrepreneurial skills were apparent early on. At 14, when he was selling local newspapers as a part-time job, he

devised a marketing scheme that would enable him to win a competition to sell the largest number of copies.

He joined a Billerica accountancy firm after leaving school, but quit in 1983 to found a computer programming company, Impetus. Sadly, reports that he worked out of the boiler room of his local cinema in Southend are apocryphal.

Mr Stanford, who set up Demon with Giles Todd, the former technical director, has always been explicit about the motives that drive him: to make as much money as possible as quickly as possible.

So is £33m enough to be getting on with? "There's no such thing as enough money," he said yesterday. "I like having money in my pocket, I like buying nice things. But it would be no fun to win it on the football pools. The thrill for me is to make it through big successful business deals."

Mr Stanford, who is married with an 11-year-old son, is in no hurry to spend his newfound wealth. He has treated himself to a Saab convertible, but has no other plans to splash out. Nor is he about to rest on his laurels. He has another business venture up his sleeve, soon to be announced. But he hopes to have more free time now that Demon is off his hands. "For the last six years, my hobbies have been the Internet, the Internet and the Internet," he said. "Now at least I might get the chance to play on it again."

Business, page 22

New-found galaxy is oldest ever seen

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

A NEWLY discovered galaxy has given astronomers a look back to a time when the universe was less than 800 million years old – making it the oldest and most distant object ever seen.

In finding it the scientists, including Dr Richard McMahon from Cambridge University, have displaced the previous record-holder just six weeks after it was discovered.

But Dr McMahon also hinted that his team could be on the verge of discovering many more such "infant" galaxies from the edge of time. He told the journal *Science* that "we have

a technique for searching for distant galaxies... We're in new territory here."

Mark Dickinson, at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, said: "It's quite plausible that some of these [galaxies] are young objects that are going off for the first time and making stars."

Such early starbirth could have key lessons for scientists. Esther Hu, of the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, said: "As any mother could tell you, a year's growth makes a much bigger difference in appearance and character in a toddler than in someone aged 20."

The newly-found galaxy lies some 12.3 billion light years

from the Earth. From that distance, its light would have started travelling towards us when the universe was less than 800 million years-old – about one-fourteenth of its present age, generally estimated at around 13 billion years.

The astronomers discovered it by the "red shift" of its light – the amount of stretching in the wavelengths, caused by the ongoing expansion of the universe.

With everything in the universe moving away from everything else as the impetus from the Big Bang makes space expand, the size of the red shift is the key element in measuring absolute distance.

The latest sighting was made with one of the two 10-metre twin Keck telescopes on Mount Mauna Kea, Hawaii, the world's most powerful optical observatories.

The new galaxy's age, dating from about 60 million years earlier in cosmic history than the previous record holder, a galaxy found by another team in March, could hold significant information for astronomers. Full details of the discovery are to be published in the journal *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

The astronomers found the galaxy by looking for a particular type of high-energy radiation emitted by hydrogen atoms as massive stars form.



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Police investigate minister's expenses

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

HELEN LIDDELL, the Treasury minister, was under police investigation yesterday after an allegation of irregularities in her election expenses. However, it seemed highly unlikely that any charges would be brought.

The allegation concerned a donation made to Ms Liddell's Airdrie and Shotts constituency party which was not mentioned on her expense return after the 1997 general election. Labour sources suggested there was no need to mention it because it was not given during the election campaign.

Figures released by Labour yesterday showed that the MP, who has been tipped for promotion to the cabinet, spent £4,572 on her campaign against a limit of £7,000.

Patrick Moran, a former local party treasurer who was recently vot-

ed out of office, claimed a £400 cheque from the shop workers' union Usdaw and an individual donation of £10 were undeclared by Mrs Liddell's agent Karen Turnbull when the return was filed.

Last night, the Labour Party dismissed the allegation and said it was confident the police would take the matter no further.

A Labour source said: "There's no question of irregularity. The party is entirely confident there is nothing in the unfounded and minor allegations made by a single individual who has an axe to grind."

Yesterday's development was the second such embarrassment for Labour. Last week, the Labour MP for Newark, Fiona Jones, was charged under the Representation of the People Act with filing inaccurate returns on her election expenses.

Although Ms Liddell has a 15,000 majority over the Scottish National

Party, her Airdrie and Shotts constituency was at the centre of controversy over allegations of sleaze in Monklands District Council. She took a strong stance against corruption.

Mrs Liddell entered Parliament in 1994 after winning the Monklands East by-election following the death of the then Labour leader John Smith. The campaign was acrimonious and marked by allegations of wrong-doing by the Monklands Council which led Labour to launch an inquiry.

Opposition politicians used the new allegation as proof that there was still internal strife among Labour members in the Monklands area. A spokesman for the Scottish National Party said: "This is an extremely serious allegation."

"Labour has been in trouble in many areas of the Central Belt throughout the last year and this may be more of the same."



Canvas of opinion: The final day of judging in London yesterday for the 1998 BP Portrait Award. Top prize is £10,000 and the best of the 600 entries will be exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, which organises the event. Photograph: Andrew Burman

Irish terror suspect is shot

A SUSPECTED member of a dissident hardline Irish republican group was shot and injured by police last night during an attempted raid on a security van in the Irish Republic.

The shooting followed a police surveillance operation in Co Wicklow and first reports said the shot man was seriously hurt. Five men were arrested after the incident and police recovered a number of weapons, including a rocket launcher.

Also found at the scene was an assault rifle and two handguns. The gunmen were understood to have set up a roadblock near Ashford on the main Wicklow-Dublin road in a bid to hold up a security van transporting cash. They were confronted by armed police and there was an exchange of fire, during which one of the raiders was hit. No police officers were injured.

Fashanu hunted by police

JUSTIN FASHANU, the former football player, is being hunted by the police in the United States after being charged with sexually assaulting a 17-year-old male student.

The teenager claims he woke up in bed after a drinking session to find the footballer allegedly performing a sex act. Fashanu was questioned and charged but when officers later went to search his flat in Elliott City, Maryland, they discovered he had left with his clothes and personal belongings, a Howard County police spokesman said. Mr Fashanu moved to Maryland earlier this year to coach with the newly formed Maryland Mania football team. The alleged incident happened on 25 March.

Escaped paedophile caught

A PAEDOPHILE who was on the loose for almost 48 hours after slipping away from two guards during an escorted trip to a swimming pool was recaptured by police yesterday.

David Marker, 62, disappeared from the Abraham Moss leisure centre in Crumpsall, Manchester, on Wednesday. But a police patrol spotted him in the Urmoston area yesterday morning and he was being held at a police station somewhere in Greater Manchester, awaiting an escorted transfer to Stockton Hall Mental Health Hospital, York.

The Department of Health said the private hostel which arranged Marker's visit to the pool would now be expected to review its procedures and prepare a report into the incident.

Welsh quango chief quits

THE chairman of the Welsh Development Agency yesterday resigned in the run-up to its reorganisation under the Government's devolution plans. Mr David Rowe-Beddoe said he would step down before his current contract expires next June.

But he also confirmed that he would apply to be chairman of the new expanded WDA when the post - the key public job in Wales - was advertised and determined by open competition under the new Welsh assembly.

Sally Croft

AN ARTICLE in yesterday's *Independent*, stated that Sally Croft, one of the two former members of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh sect released from a prison sentence in the United States had been convicted of attempted murder. In fact the charge was conspiracy to murder. We apologise for the error.

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Spring brings a lull before the ice-storm ahead

From the ridge sheltering the Sherpa village of Dingboche from the north, the first thing that struck us was the new green of barley shoots in the patchwork of stone-wall enclosed fields.

Spring is just taking hold in these most northerly fields of the Khumbu and after weeks of looking on nothing but ice and rock the effect is profound.

It is like a lure. Further down the colours will be warmer as the rhododendrons, primulas and briar roses start into bloom. But Dingboche, at 4,350m, is as far down the valley as our Himalayan Kingdoms Expeditions group will descend. In three days, we will be back at Base Camp waiting for the weather that will allow us to make a bid for the top.

The five-hour descent to Dingboche took us past the memorials to Sherpas who have died serving climbing expeditions in the Everest region. Decked with prayer flags, these sad memorials stand along a crest with the highest peaks of the Himalayas to the North and the lower valleys of the Khumbu, where the men would otherwise have tended their fields of potatoes and buckwheat.

Our retreat to one of the many trekker lodges at around the 4,000m level is standard procedure for Everest climbers shortly before their big push. I have certainly got thinner and my muscles have become wasted during our weeks of acclimatisation at high camps, including Camp 3 at some 7,200 metres on the Lhotse Face. Hopefully a few days of yak steaks, hash browns with cheese, bread and honey and the Nepali-brewed San Miguel beer in the Snow Lion Lodge will put a bit of fat back on.

Base Camp, when we left, was in a state of transition. Some climbers were still up high completing their acclimatisation and others had already left for a spot of R&R in the (comparatively) oxygen-rich air of places like our own Dingboche. Meanwhile, Sherpas from the various expeditions were completing the job of fixing lines to the South Col and stocking the high camps with oxygen.

Several of us have brought down coughs and various other ailments that we hope will clear in these more normal conditions. My own, fairly slight back, seems to have gone al-



STEPHEN GOODWIN

Everest Diary

Dingboche

most overnight. But there is a gamble to staying at a lodge. Trekkers are quite likely to have brought up new bugs and the Sherpa children are positive germ factories.

Getting back to full health is a primary objective of Lily Leonard, who has the distinction of being the team member who has been highest on Everest. In 1995, the 41-year old American reached 8,500m, just below the south summit, when chest-high snow forced a halt. "If I hadn't been successful for some other reason to do with myself, I guess I might not have come back. But I felt it was just bad luck and in normal snow conditions I could have reached the summit," she said.

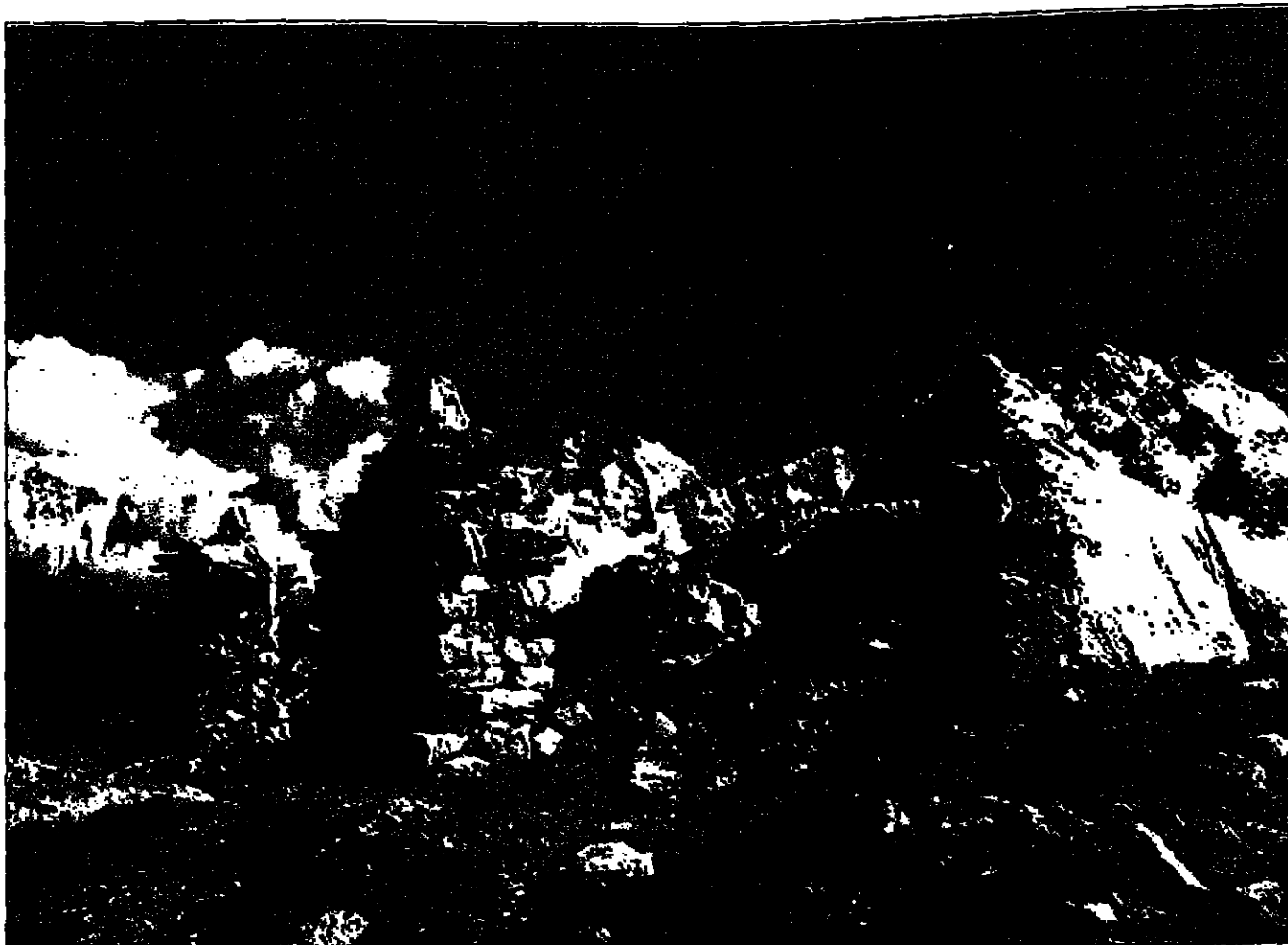
Lily is shaking off a bad cough, but it, and the exigencies of time, have probably put paid to a bold plan to climb not only Everest but its neighbours Lhotse (8,501m) and Nuptse (7,879m) in the same trip.

An administrator in a brokerage office in Hong Kong, Lily took to climbing when, as she says, she "became too old and too slow to chase a squash ball". For five years, she was member of the then colony's squash team. Gratifyingly, to me at least, she is not one of the "it has to be Everest" brigade. Lily's first intention was to climb Lhotse. "I wanted to climb an 8,000m peak. Lhotse is a more technically interesting peak than Everest and it's cheaper." And now she says if she could pick any peak to be successful on, it would be K2, the world's second highest mountain and a tick that would carry more kudos among mountaineers than the one for which we currently are bound.

"The beauty of mountaineering is it is an excuse to go different parts of the world. I think I will get as much satisfaction if I am successful in this venture as I did in climbing Ama Dablam [6,856m, the chis-

el-head peak that dominates the approach walk to Everest], or visiting the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. And it isn't just the getting to the top or a simply visual experience. It's the smell of the juniper, the friends you make, and the whole feeling of a trip that makes it worthwhile."

Lily's summit prospects should be helped by her not having a broken leg. Though she did not know it when she turned back at 8,500m in 1995, she had fractured the head of her femur in a fall while descending from Camp 3 on an acclimatisation trip. "If I could get that far with a busted wheel, even though I'm three years older, I think I'm in with a good chance," she says.



Standing stones: Memorials to Sherpa guides who have died serving climbing expeditions in the Everest region - a stark reminder of the dangers ahead

Photograph: Stephen Goodwin

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Doctors targeted in battle against abortion

By Louise Jury

ANTI-abortion campaigners are to encourage women who suffer illness or mental trauma after a termination to sue the doctors responsible for allowing the operation.

In a new tactic, immediately condemned by opponents, the anti-abortion group Life hopes to challenge attitudes to terminations through the courts. Professor Jack Scarisbrick, Life's national chairman, said there was now "conclusive" medical evidence that abortions left women at vastly increased risk of conditions including breast cancer, infertility and mental breakdown.

Under the 1967 Abortion Act, two doctors have to be satisfied that an abortion is necessary to prevent damage to either the mother or her baby's health.

But Life claims that as the

evidence suggests termination is more dangerous than a full-term pregnancy, doctors could now face mass litigation from women who were not informed of the risks.

Professor Scarisbrick said: "We believe the medical evidence now conclusively shows the dangers. Report after report shows that procured abortion is one of the most dangerous procedures a woman can undergo and yet the abortion industry refuses to recognise that what they do carries enormous risks for women."

"In this country, we are simply sticking our heads in the sand about the real consequences of abortion."

"We believe the only way we are going to get the medical profession to acknowledge the truth (about abortion) is by going to the courts and forcing the issue out into the open."

Life believes it should not

use its own money to fund legal action directly, but intends to set up a new freephone telephone line to advise women on the options.

Professor Scarisbrick said it already dealt with large numbers of women who have suffered problems after abortions, and the group knew of at least one damages claim due to come to court shortly.

However, a British Medical Association spokesman said

they did not expect a flood of litigation.

"There is no culture of doctors rubber-stamping abortions. Each decision is made for the welfare of the mother and child. Evidence of the type which Life is using for these claims does not exist."

"As long as the abortion is approved according to the criteria of the 1967 Act, including the fact that the mother has fully consented, then it would be

very difficult to bring a case of this nature."

David Nolan, of the pro-choice Birth Control Trust, accused Life of switching tactics from legislation to litigation because it had failed to get the 1967 Abortion Act scrapped.

"Years of medical research into abortion and its after-effects has shown it to be a completely safe operation," he said. "Life's alternative of forcing women to continue with un-

wanted pregnancies is nothing short of barbaric."

Janet Mearns, of the National Abortion Campaign, said where an abortion was necessary, it was much safer to terminate than go through a full pregnancy.

"I don't think Life will have many takers for court action, because those women who come forward will very often have other problems unassociated with an abortion. It is unfair to be using them in this way."

Next week the local council is to confirm a scheme which carries echoes of the old *News Chronicle's* "Lobby Ludd" promotion which urged readers to seek the man out, brandish a copy of the old Liberal newspaper and claim a fiver.

In South Wales, the crisp packet is a prime target. Armed with a roll of notes, the council's three uniformed litter wardens will venture out in territory stretching from British Steel's giant plant on the coast to Seven Sisters, a former mining village on the edge of the Brecon Beacons.

The carrot offered by the Labour-controlled council is complemented with a stick in the shape of legislation which allows litter bugs to be fined £25. The wardens will also snap offenders whose mug shots could end up on display in a rogues' gallery.

But if someone is seen binning their trash, a warden will move in, smile and make an offer. Just how much cash will be carried, remains a secret.

Chris Williams, Principal Community Services Officer, believes the word will get round. "We aim to reverse circumstances where people don't care enough about the environment," he said.

However, a spokesman for the Keep Wales Tidy campaign said: "We find it disappointing that people should need any financial incentive to stop dropping litter."

By Tony Heath

A CHOCOLATE bar wrapper or used tissue deposited in the municipal litter bin could be worth £5 to the tidy-minded - provided the conscientious citizen is in the precincts of the borough of Neath Port Talbot.

Faulty cookers 'helped spread of BSE'

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

THERMOMETERS were often broken or useless on the giant "batch" cookers that rendering companies used to process cattle and animal feed, a former government scientist said yesterday.

In some cases cooker operators even had to run their hands through the processed material after it had cooled down to decide if it was ready. Peter Smith told the BSE inquiry in south London.

His testimony adds weight to the contention made by government scientists since December 1987 that inadequate heat treatment failed to kill off the BSE disease agent when infected animals were added to the cookers. The remains were then made into meat and bone meal which was added to cattle feed.

The parlous state of the cookers and the systems used to oversee them still existed in the late 1980s, when the epidemic was at its height, said Mr Smith, who worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) veterinary investigations centre in Preston. He said there were still inadequate controls at 11 rendering plants which he checked in March and April 1988, three months after the official declaration about the cause of the epidemic.

"Control was left to the experience of the operator," Mr Smith concluded in 1988. "It is surprising the BSE problem has not arisen earlier if batch cooking is a suspect as it is."

The inquiry, set up to investigate the causes of the BSE epidemic and its handling, was adjourned until June. It is due to report to the Government by the end of the year.

The first prosecution in England for serving beef on the bone has been suspended. Rother council in east Sussex has suspended its case against publican Alan Coomber pending the outcome of the appeal in a similar case in Scotland.



Sweet talk: Richard Branson at London's Euston Station yesterday for the announcement of Virgin's first direct service to Blackpool

Photograph: Reuters

Blackpool goes in search of an ice-cool image

By Simon Tait

RICHARD BRANSON'S Virgin Trains and Blackpool Pleasure Beach have put together a united front for an attack on enemy territory, the south of England. The Blackpool Tower, the "Big One" roller coaster and even the beach have been re-created in London's Euston Station in an effort to draw southerners to the delights of Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

Variety entertainment, born and nurtured in northern clubs and pier shows is dying because of southern prejudice, according to Amanda Thompson, who runs the Pleasure Beach through Stageworks Productions. And, against all hopes, the BBC TV documentary about the Pleasure Beach in which she starred might have accelerated

ed the decline. "That wretched TV documentary shoved us back into the Dark Ages again as unsophisticated, brash, northern entertainment, and we left that behind long ago. That programme won't do my productions any good, it will damage live entertainment and it won't encourage promoters to come here."

This weekend marks the launch of the Pleasure Beach's summer season with a new ice spectacular, and a new magic show starring Richard de Vere opening tonight. In two months a £2m theatre opens with Vladimir, the former trapeze star of Cirque du Soleil, in another new production. "We'd like to be able to offer these shows in other parts of the country, but it's impossible to get producers to come here and see how good they are," said Miss Thompson.

son, the fourth generation of the family which bought the 44 acres of the Pleasure Beach 101 years ago. "That programme might have been good TV, but it was edited so much that it bore no relationship to what actually happens here. We were not portrayed as I was led to believe we would be."

"It made us look tacky, but they will see that that's not us at all, and what we are doing is important. Just ask the eight and a half million people who come through here every year," she said as she took the 26 ice dancers, 22 of whom have skated for their countries, through their final poses before the opening of the 1998 Hot Ice Show. "This show is technically the most demanding because it's based on the technique and talent of the performers rather than

themes like Holiday on Ice, which rely on sound and light."

In conjunction with Virgin, which is starting its first direct London-Blackpool line this week, the Pleasure Beach is bringing its campaign to London with the Euston display.

But Miss Thompson, whose 95-year-old grandmother still chairs the company, is competing with opinion shared by the Prime Minister, which believes facilities in Blackpool are

no longer good enough. The Labour Party is forsaking the Golden Mile, kiss-me-quick hats and the biggest white-knuckle ride in the world for its conference venue in favour of southern seaside resorts.

"Suddenly they're all too posh to come to Blackpool when they get power," said Miss Thompson.

"I don't understand what they want - we have good hotels, amazing entertainment

and fine restaurants. We've been very poorly portrayed in the south, and it's threatening to kill the live variety entertainment we provide. But Richard Branson has faith enough to extend his line here and by 2000 we will have a new dark ride, using top-of-the-line technology, and, we hope, our own hotel at the Pleasure Beach. We are committed to invest more in our shows, and we're fighting back."

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Beat goes on in Irish police strike

By Alan Murdoch
in Dublin

IRELAND'S first national garda strike saw portly middle-aged sergeants and inspectors emerge with pride intact after being tested on the beat against a younger generation of criminal.

But the Government was shaken by the strength of participation in the strike in pursuit of a 39 per cent pay demand. More than 5,000 officers took part, more than 80 per cent of the rank and file membership. The figure was nearer 100 per cent in outlying areas.

Fortunately, there was only a relatively small number of serious incidents during the day. After one raid by a masked robber on Quigley's Point post office near Buncrana in Donegal yesterday the local superintendent Tom Long told how eight senior officers renewed acquaintance with their sprinting legs. After an hour's successful chase a man was arrested and all the cash was recovered.

Banned by law from striking, the absent officers withdrew

their services by ringing in sick en masse with what was termed an outbreak of "blue flu".

Cadets in training and senior ranks who were not members of the Garda Representative Association (GRA) behind the protest filled in street patrol duties, while administrative work and traffic policing was largely abandoned for the day.

Court cases were reportedly disrupted by the absence of officers due to give evidence. The Irish Army remained on standby, ready to intervene if serious problems arose.

The GRA executive will meet next week with a subsequent conference to decide on possible further one-day stoppages if no improved offer is forthcoming. Its acting general secretary PJ Stone said: "We won't be unreasonable if people sit down and talk to us." He complained the Government had reneged on its promise of an independent review of Garda pay going back to 1981.

The justice minister John O'Donoghue said he was disappointed about the strike but added that he could provide more money without undermining economic strategy.

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Freeze frame: Tim Knowles working on his sculpture, Snow White, which is made from Wall's ice cream. He has had to carry out the work in the back of an articulated truck at a temperature of -25C at Spike Island visual arts centre in Bristol
Photograph: Chris Ison

Meat still on sale three days after first E.coli alarm

COOKED meat provided by the Lanarkshire butcher John Barr was still on sale at a small town store nearly three days after the alarm was first raised over a food poisoning outbreak, an inquiry heard yesterday.

Pies and similar products supplied by Mr Barr were taken off the shelves of the Scotmid supermarket in High Street in Bonnybridge, central Scotland, on Monday 25 November 1996.

But cooked meat supplied by Mr Barr remained on sale for a short time. Mary Halliday, a shop assistant, told the inquiry into the world's worst outbreak of E.coli O157 food poisoning in which 21 elderly people died.

After she served one customer with a portion of cooked meat, she pressed a key on her weighing machine and noticed John Barr's name on the label that came out.

"When I handed the customer her cooked meat, I thought 'that's John Barr's'. I looked at the supervisor and she must have thought the same because she took it off sale," she told the inquiry. It was at that point that the store cleared its

shelves of the John Barr cooked meat products.

The inquiry, which is being held in Motherwell, has heard in earlier evidence that John Barr's shop in Wishaw, Lanarkshire, was first implicated in the outbreak on the previous Friday and Saturday, and health chiefs met Mr Barr at his home late on Friday night.

On Saturday health officials went to John Barr's shop, a press release was issued, and Sunday newspapers publicised the outbreak.

A senior member of staff at Scotmid has already told the inquiry that on the Sunday, he was unaware the chain's stores sold John Barr's cooked meats as Mr Barr assured him that day that he only supplied Scotmid with sausage products.

Mrs Halliday told the inquiry that she had noticed Sunday newspaper headlines about the outbreak, but had not read the story.

When she arrived for work on the Monday, senior staff at the shop ordered John Barr's pies to be removed from sale, but the cooked meat remained

on sale until about 10am - the point at which she noticed Mr Barr's name on the label produced for her customer.

Later that day senior staff arrived from Scotmid's head office.

Mrs Halliday told the inquiry that the store, formerly run by the Bonnybridge Co-operative Society, had only been taken over by Scotmid three months previously.

It was after the takeover that Mr Barr's firm began supplying the shop, making near-daily deliveries.

She told the inquiry that she herself ate meat bought from the shop, including a pie she had bought on the Friday.

She later tested positive for E.coli but did not become ill.

But her six-year-old daughter had diarrhoea and was off school for a week, she said.

The number of people in Scotland suffering from food poisoning have more than doubled in the last 10 years, the Scottish Office revealed yesterday. Annual notifications for food poisoning have risen from 4,230 in 1985 to 10,234 in 1996.

Teaching union calls off action after a day

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

THE largest teaching union yesterday announced the end of its industrial action over workloads, only a day after it started. The National Union of Teachers said it accepted the contents of a draft Government circular laying out how heads should cut bureaucracy in schools.

Doug McAvoy, the union's general secretary, said once the guidance was sent out and schools complied, the industrial action would end.

The protest would only continue if heads refused to accept the Government's advice, he said.

The rival NASUWT union, however, decided to continue its industrial action, and reopen talks with ministers aimed at strengthening the Government's advice.

The circular says schools should only hold meetings after school if they are "clearly

justified", and should limit meetings to an average of two a week.

It also urges schools to adopt model policies rather than re-inventing their own.

Reports to parents should also be restricted to one a term.

Mr McAvoy said: "It is a dramatic improvement. The sanc-



Doug McAvoy: 'It is a dramatic improvement'

tions we imposed were an attempt to get an agreement. That's standard trade union practice. Most agreements are a compromise.

"We will have members who don't like this. They have to understand that when a trade union imposes action, that is a means by which to gain improvements in working conditions.

"When that improvement has been gained, you can't continue the action."

A Department for Education and Employment spokesman welcomed the NUT's decision.

"The Government has been committed to reducing bureaucracy in schools since it established a working party last summer to work with teachers to ensure it does not get in the way of raising standards.

"We will shortly be issuing a circular to schools giving practical advice on how they can cut administrative burdens," she said.

Bus and train firm takes to the air

THE Canadian entrepreneur in charge of Prestwick airport, yesterday set out his vision for south-west Scotland as an international transit hub, creating thousands of jobs.

Matthew Hudson led a consortium of businessmen who bought Prestwick in 1992 for less than £3m and formed Prestwick Aviation Holdings. Yesterday, they sold a controlling share to newly formed Stagecoach Aviation for £41m.

In a joint press conference with Brian Souter, chairman of Stagecoach - which also has bus and train operating interests - Mr Hudson said he had sought the takeover to allow further investment in the airport, turning it into a transport hub through which freight would travel between Europe and North America.

Prestwick already handles more freight than Gatwick and Heathrow combined.

Of Mr Souter, he said: "I've found a Scottish shareholder with deep pockets who shares this commitment."

He continued: "It became clear to my colleagues and I two years ago that the potential for the airport, and the need for that potential to be realised in terms of Scotland's economic benefit, meant that we would need other capital than our own."

backing from four international companies, but rejected each one as working with them would have meant losing control of the airport from Scotland.

He had moved on to try and find a company which was "Scottish, and likely to remain Scottish for the foreseeable future". He continued: "I did an analysis of business life in Scotland and there was an obvious candidate. It was a large public company, innovative, creative, and controlled by one family and likely to continue that way for the foreseeable future."

Viscount Younger, chairman of Prestwick Aviation Holdings, arranged a meeting between Mr Hudson and Mr Souter. Mr Souter subsequently spent a day at the airport, and then took his family on holiday with Mr Hudson's family for 10 days in Florida.

"We got on at the family level extremely well," said Mr Hudson, "and that really led to a deal. It was done on a personal, family, and Scottish basis."

Mr Souter said Stagecoach had been moving towards becoming a broadly-based transport group over the last few years. "We are excited about Prestwick, we believe that with our investment ability we can expand it on both freight and passenger levels."

Two-year taster of career in the navy

A SCHEME to provide a two-year taste of life in the Royal Navy was launched yesterday by the Government.

The armed forces minister Dr John Reid announced the details during a visit to HMS Raleigh in east Cornwall where all ratings go through their initial Naval training.

Initially there will be 200 places and those who join the innovative short engagement will also complete their 15 weeks training at Raleigh - and then go straight to sea.

"The idea is to get to sea," said a Royal Navy spokesman today, adding that it could be up to a year before ratings who joined on a regular engagement joined a ship.

Dr Reid, who took the salute at yesterday's passing out parade, said: "This new two-year short engagement will provide a first-class opportunity for the more adventurous to gain a taste of life in the Navy."

Open to people between the ages of 17 and 32, it would also offer the active job-seeker a chance to enjoy at least two years full employment. At any time during the two years entrants could apply for a transfer to a regular engagement.

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Slaves from old empire rebuild Moscow

Workers lured from nearby republics, writes Helen Womack in Moscow

IF Russia's Communists watched the independent NTV channel instead of scorning it as an organ of "Zionist propaganda", they would have gleaned some interesting information over recent weeks that might have enabled them to march for May Day under the slogan: "Slaves of the Former Soviet Union Unite!"

The hard-hitting television station, which supports Russian democracy but does not allow President Boris Yeltsin to sit on his laurels, has been running a series of reports on what it calls the emergence of slavery in the country that once followed Lenin but has now turned to

building capitalism. It has been well known for some time that the Russian mafia tricks Slav girls into slavery with the promise of lucrative work abroad. The young women leave Russia or Ukraine naively thinking they are going to be "dancers" and find themselves in brothels anywhere from New York to Amsterdam, unable to return home because their pimps have confiscated their passports.

Now, according to NTV, the same cruel technique is being used in other areas of the former Soviet Union and is affecting workers in a wide range of industries. The slave traders play

on the difference in living standards between the former Soviet republics and depressed parts of provincial Russia and the capital, Moscow, where the mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, has managed to give some residents at least a sense that they are approaching the level of life in the West.

One of the television reports showed a mini-supermarket in Moscow that was busted by police after a teenage girl, originally from Kazakhstan, escaped from the basement and said she had been held there for nine months and forced to work from morning to night without

pay. Police found several more teenagers in her position when they raided the store. All from the Central Asian republic, where poverty is even deeper than in Russia itself, they had been sold for \$1,000 (£600) each by their parents to the shop owner, who was also a Kazakh.

Well-heeled Muscovites had no idea of the conditions when they came in to buy their expensive imported groceries.

The case of the Kazakhs might have been a one-off human rights scandal. But then NTV went on to show construction workers from Ukraine and Moldova labouring on building sites in Moscow for wages so small that they could only afford to buy one box of porridge each per week. They could not leave because their employers had taken their passports, the television said, adding that "slave" was indeed a more appropriate term than *gastarbeiter* for a guest worker in this situation.

And yet the provincial poor continued to flood into Moscow, hoping that things would be different for them and they would find the streets paved with gold. If it was a choice between risking their lives and not being paid in obsolete coal mines in Ukraine or Siberia or taking a chance in the Russian capital, then Moscow seemed the better option.

They gathered at Moscow's Kievsky railway station at eight o'clock each morning, offering themselves to employers at an impromptu labour exchange. Trade unions were powerless to save them from exploitation because none of the immigrant workers had a Moscow *propiska*, the supposedly abolished residency permit of Soviet times that still in fact controls the movement of the non-Mus-

covite population as the past laws once restricted the blacks in apartheid South Africa.

Having watched the NTV series, I decided to try and find a slave. I strolled past various apartment blocks under construction but found the guard dogs off-putting. I watched workers finishing off flowerbeds and lamp-lit paths around the newly completed New Opera, which is to give competition to the Bolshoi Theatre. Well-paid Yugoslavs

'In theory, I am free. I have no money for a ticket home or for my family.'

and not slaves had built that, I was told. On one warm evening, I also moved among the roller skaters in the Alexandrovsky Gardens under the Kremlin wall, which is having its famous red bricks renovated. I noticed that at sundown, the workers came down from the scaffolding and disappeared into a row of metal huts at the lower end of the garden.

Russians soldiers guarded the huts. "Can I speak to one of the lads from Ukraine or Moldova?" I asked, hoping that the conscript would not find my accent too foreign and

Hammer and sickle: Thousands take part in the traditional May Day parade in Moscow, a display of international workers' solidarity. But Russia's slave labour has nothing to celebrate

Photograph: Alexander Natruskin/Reuters

take me for a relative of one of the builders. A few moments later, a thin man with a moustache came out. We sat on a bench a few yards from the huts. He introduced himself as Georgy Tatar from Moldova: on the border with Romania. He did not run away when he learnt that I was in fact a British correspondent.

"There are hundreds of men working here," he said quietly. "It's like in ancient Egypt. I came from my village because I could not feed my wife and kids. I was promised \$400 a month but I have been working here for two months and I still have not been paid. I manage to eat by borrowing money from the other lads."

Mr Tatar said foreign workers from countries such as Czechoslovakia were paid properly and put up in hotels but men from former Soviet republics that the Russians call the "near abroad" were treated worse. "We just change our clothes in these huts. At night, we are bussed out to a barracks at Teply Stan [on the edge of Moscow]. We sleep 12 to a room."

"You don't need to be afraid of the soldiers. They're just from the *southeast*," he added. He was referring to a unit of the Russian army that is reserved for the lowest of the low, including those who refuse to bear arms. They are indeed slaves, spending their two years of compulsory military service building roads and working on other construction projects for nothing more than cigarette money.

"Are you free?" I asked Mr Tatar, tentatively. "I mean, do you have a passport, can you leave any time you want?" He put his hand in his jacket and pulled out his documents.

"In theory, yes," he said, "I am free. But I have no money for a ticket home. My wife and children do not want to see me empty-handed. So I must go on building Yeltsin's castle. I hope one day they will pay me."

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Tales of horror from Malaysia's camps

Government that once welcomed foreign workers is now using riot police against them

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Kuala Lumpur

IT IS more than a month since the young man named Nasir was admitted to the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital but it is obvious he is still in a very bad way. The gashes and holes in his chest and arms have healed to white scars, and the plaster on his leg has been replaced with a bandage. But there is dried blood on his sheets and pillow, and the surgical scar on his belly is livid and raw. Nasir is not going anywhere but, just in case he should decide to take a walk, his skinny left wrist is handcuffed to the bed.

Two policemen guard him and, although they have slipped away for lunch, the presence of visitors makes him nervous. "I'm afraid to talk to you because the police will beat me up," he says. Nasir understands very well what his captors are capable of. The gashes on his chest and the break in his leg were caused by blows from police batons so violent that they broke the skin. The smaller, round patches are scars from bullet entry wounds - the one in his belly has never healed properly. Nasir was not tried or convicted of any crime. He was shot and beaten up by Malaysian riot police for a simple reason - because he ran away from a detention camp for foreign workers.

His is just one of the most dramatic cases. Over the last few years, according to a growing body of evidence, thousands of foreigners have been beaten, bullied, or have suffered medical neglect and torture in immigrant detention camps throughout west Malaysia. The abuse has killed some and left many more sick, impoverished and desperate.

The Malaysian government denies the allegations, and Malaysian human rights activists who document the evidence risk prosecution and imprisonment. But despite repeated requests, the government refuses to allow the media, non-governmental organisations and even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to enter the camps.

The tragedy of people like Nasir has its roots, paradoxically, in a



Malaysian police check if Semenih camp detainees are alive after the 26 March riot which broke out when officers tried to repatriate inmates

Photograph: EPA

success story. Until last year, under the vigorous leadership of its Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia was an Asian success story, with high growth and ambitions to rise from developing to industrialised status by 2020. But visionary determination was not enough to achieve Dr Mahathir's vision: the skyscrapers, roads and factories also required large amounts of cheap labour, much of it foreign, and much of it illegal.

For years police and immigration authorities turned a blind eye to waves of poor foreigners - many, like Nasir, from Indonesia - brought over for a fee by highly organised "agents". But last year, along with

most of its south-east Asian neighbours, Malaysia was struck by currency depreciation and economic crisis. The job of sending home illegal immigrants - Operation Go Away - suddenly became urgent.

But both the way in which they have been rounded up and the conditions in the camps have been severely criticised. In 1995, a Malaysian human rights organisation called Tenaganita published a report based on interviews with former detainees and detailing serious abuses. As a consequence, the head of Tenaganita, Iren Fernandez, is on trial for disseminating "false news". But interviews conducted this week indicate that little has changed.

Yesterday, outside Lenggeng detention centre, 30 miles from Kuala Lumpur, an Iranian man tried to get access to his compatriot, Gholam Reza Hosseini. Both are asylum seekers, he explained, who had been imprisoned for political reasons in Iran, and had finally managed to gain Australian visas. A month ago, Mr Hosseini was caught by the police without his papers and sent to Lenggeng. Since then no one has been able to visit him.

Mr Hosseini has written to a friend complaining of illness, a lack of water for bathing and about guards who demand bribes even for a drink of water. "We have tickets to go to Australia next week," says his friend. "I

am afraid they will take him to the airport and put him on a plane to Iran. There he will be killed."

Local people whose homes overlook the Semenih detention centre confirm many of the allegations in Tenaganita's report. "You could see through the fence when they first brought them in," said one woman. "They would make them stand in the sun and beat them with batons. Sometimes the sticks had barbed wire around them. Their relatives who were visiting would complain about having to pay bribes to the guards."

It was at Semenih on 26 March that the abuse reached its climax. Early that morning, Malaysian riot police entered camps across the

country and began transporting their occupants to ports for repatriation. Semenih contained several hundred detainees from Aceh, in Sumatra, where Islamic guerrillas have been fighting for independence from Indonesia since the 1950s. A riot broke out, and in the course of the fighting, hundreds of Acehese break out through the fence. Nasir was among them, but was shot, captured and beaten up.

According to the official count, eight men from Aceh and one policeman were killed. Local people say the shooting began at 2am and went on for more than six hours. "I cannot believe such a small number were killed," said one local man.

Former PM admits part in Rwanda genocide

By Rupert Cornwell

IN A landmark development, a former prime minister of Rwanda has pleaded guilty before an international court to six charges of genocide, thus becoming the first official from the former Hutu regime to admit that the 1994 slaughter of more than 800,000 people amounted to genocide.

Addressing the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, Jean Kambanda declared that he fully understood he would be able to mount no defence to the charges, which carry a likely sentence of life in prison. "In deciding to plead guilty, I did so consciously," he told the court. "No one forced me to do it."

Thus far none of the other 24 persons accused of genocide has entered a similar plea, insisting that the numbers of victims had been exaggerated and that the killings were a normal part of war. Mr Kambanda's decision raises the prospect that he will testify against some of them.

Even by the ponderous standards of international courts, the ICTR has hitherto been a debacle, unable to wrap up a single trial in three-and-a-half years of existence, and savagely criticised for incompetence and waste in a United Nations report in 1997. But with the guilty plea, "a certain psychological corner had been turned," according to a senior court official.

Mr Kambanda was prime minister over a three-month period in 1994 when at least 800,000 - some estimate 1 million - Tutsi and moderate Hutus were killed. Though order of a kind has returned to Rwanda, rebel Hutu militias are still active in the north-west, killing 10 people in an attack on a village only this week.

In contrast to the ICTR, the current Rwandan government is pressing harsh justice against those suspected of participating in the massacres. Last week, 22 convicted criminals were publicly executed, and 130,000 others are in jail awaiting trial.

The government in Kigali vows that it will execute all those found guilty of "Category One" war crimes. Mr Kambanda, on the other hand, lived quietly in Kenya before being extradited to Tanzania last year.

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Solutions for a small planet

Blair launches campaign to buy off the French

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

FRANTIC efforts to buy off the French were under way last night to prevent the historic summit on European economic and monetary union from being overshadowed by a furious row over who will run the single currency.

Tony Blair as summit chairman will try to steer a compromise today which ensures that the job goes for eight years to the Dutch Central Banker Wim Duisenberg, but allows the French to walk away with some grace.

French President Jacques Chirac was officially clinging to his demand last night that a Frenchman - not the majority-backed Dutch candidate - should head the future European Central Bank.

The bank, to be established in July, will set interest rate policy for the euro zone and its president will

hold one of the most powerful positions in Europe. The French European Affairs Minister, Pierre Moscovici, said the eight-year term of office should be split *de facto* and that France should be in charge at the bank when euro notes and coins go into circulation in 2002.

Amid mounting concern, particularly in Germany, that splitting the term of office would rob the post of independence and undermine the credibility of the euro, a number of sweeteners for the French were being discussed.

The presidency of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development could now go to a Frenchman, while the European Commission signalled a major concession to the French in a long-running dispute over Credit Lyonnais, the troubled French bank. Jacques Santer, the European Commission president, indicated that the com-

mission may not block a French government move to channel millions of pounds in state aid to the bank.

The French were also handed another olive branch as Germany backed away from a bid to tighten budgetary discipline for the "in" countries. France, faced with a massive and growing unemployment problem, had objected to German demands that single currency countries freeze public spending and commit themselves to doing so in writing, for the rest of this year.

The text of a declaration which was set to be agreed by EU finance ministers last night omitted the key passages which the French had rejected.

Failure to settle the ECB row today would send a damaging signal to the financial markets. Central bankers are nervous at the prospect of the key job falling victim to political influence. An initial compromise was for the eight-year term of

office of the president to be halved, with the French candidate, Jean-Claude Trichet, taking over from the Dutchman midway through 2002.

But this would be in flagrant contravention of the Maastricht treaty and would invite claims that the custodian of the euro was not independent. The European Commission repeated its view yesterday that the term of office could not be split under the rules of the treaty.

Another option would be for a gentleman's agreement allowing Mr Duisenberg to retire although this would not be a formal agreement.

One of the main obstacles to a deal along these lines is that the Dutch government, facing elections next week, is reluctant to be seen to have caved in to French pressure.

Tony Blair was in the Netherlands last night attempting to agree a strategy with the Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok.

It may be their money, but it's our custard

THERE WILL be a strong British flavour to the launch of the euro in Brussels today after Britain insisted on the heads of state of the European Union sitting down to an all-British menu for lunch, writes Colin Brown.

Chirac and the other European heads will settle the final details for the euro over a lunch hosted by Tony Blair, as the leader of the European Presidency.

Beef will be off the menu but there were some European eyebrows raised at the solidly British menu of

Scottish salmon, Welsh lamb and an English cheese-board followed by chocolate parfait in a whisky-flavoured custard.

Britain had the choice of the menu even though the European Council is picking up the bill for the meal in Brussels. There had been

suggestions the historic lunch should have reflected the variety of the European nations and the French objected to the menu being printed in English, but that left British officials unimpressed. "The bloody French are always complaining," said one.



Standard bearer: A neo-Nazi sympathiser carries a flag during a rally of the far-right NPD. Photograph AP

Germany's new Nazis clash with left

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

FRESH from their stunning election victory last weekend, neo-Nazis in east Germany took the campaign into the streets yesterday, only to see their thunder stolen by the extreme left.

Rallying at the Leipzig monument commemorating the defeat of Napoleon, thousands of black-shirted thugs of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) covered behind police lines as masked combatants of the ultra-left pelted them with bottles, ball-bearings and paving stones. More than 6,000 police troops and border guards fought to maintain order; their water cannons directed mostly against the punks flying the red flag.

The NPD had hoped for a 15,000-strong crowd but could only muster 4,000. They and their red-and-black banners were bused into the city after a court in Leipzig ruled overnight that the demonstration could not be banned.

In the morning, police cordoned off the centre of Leipzig, keeping both sides away from the shopping district, and erected roadblocks on all main thoroughfares into the city. They let

the buses pass, after confiscating weapons from passengers.

The left, however, had already arrived for an anti-Nazi concert on Thursday night, and laid on a welcome for their adversaries by covering the 300ft tall monument with a banner declaring "Fascism - never again". It was the ultra-left who opened yesterday's proceedings by charging police lines and hurling stones and petrol bombs. Four people, including two police officers, were injured in the ensuing battle, and dozens arrested.

The neo-Nazis maintained discipline, however, and patiently listened to their speakers. Holger Apfel, head of the NPD's youth wing, was cheered when he called for deporting foreigners who were supposed to steal jobs from Germans and sponge off the country's welfare system.

It was these kind of slogans that netted another right-wing party, the German People's Union (DVU), nearly 200,000 votes in last Sunday's Saxony-Anhalt elections. The NPD's spokesmen yesterday again rejected an alliance with the DVU "phantom party", even though the latter has just scored the biggest triumph for the German extreme right since the war.

National Front set to capture Toulon seat

THE FAR-RIGHT National Front is likely to win back its only French parliamentary seat in a by-election in Toulon this weekend, further damaging the credibility of the "traditional" French right, writes John Lichfield in Toulon.

In the first round of the election last Sunday, the far-right candidate, Cendrine Le Chevallier, wife of the National Front mayor of the town, topped the poll with 39.5 per cent of the vote. The candidate of the centre-right UDP alliance was eliminated with only 22 per cent of the vote.

Ms Le Chevallier, seeking to replace her husband, who was disqualified for infringing campaign finance rules, needs to attract less than half of the centre-right vote to beat her Socialist opponent and take the seat in the run-off tomorrow.

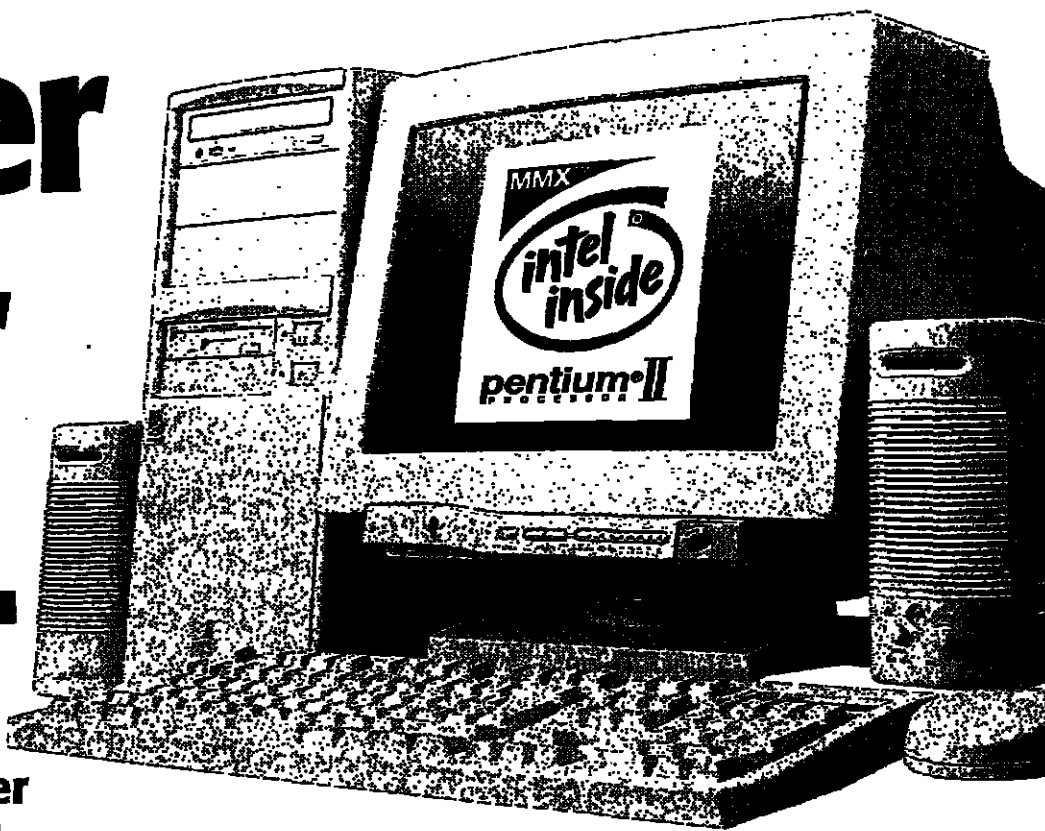
This is not guaranteed: there was a very low turn-out in the first round last Sunday (only 45 per cent) and a somewhat different cast of electors may take part this weekend. Some local and national leaders of the traditional right have been urging their voters to block the Front at all costs: oth-

ers have been silent or neutral, or have, implicitly, favoured a far-right victory.

The Toulon by-election has, therefore, confirmed the utter disarray of the French centre-right parties, split raggedly down the middle after the regional elections in March in a dispute over unauthorised local alliances with the Front.

Even though Toulon is well-established as a National Front town - the most racist town in France, it is sometimes said - a victory for Ms Le Chevallier would be a substantial coup for the extreme right in France. It would be only the second time in normal conditions that the National Front had won victory by a full majority of voters: ie with more than 50 per cent of the vote.

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US Senate backs plan to expand Nato

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

THE Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland all expressed their pleasure yesterday after the United States Senate voted by a large majority to approve their inclusion in Nato. The vote, on Thursday evening, represented a rare foreign policy victory for President Bill Clinton who had carefully steered the policy of Nato expansion through an initially sceptical political establishment.

The vote was 80 to 19, 12 more votes than the two-thirds majority required. A succession of amendments that would have set conditions for future Nato expansion and US financial obligations were all rejected. When the final vote was taken it was decided that senators would cast their votes from their assigned seats, rather than from anywhere in the chamber, a ceremonial adopted for votes regarded as of historical significance.

Mr Clinton described the bill's passage as a "milestone on the road to an undivided, democratic and peaceful Europe", and he reaffirmed US commitment both to Nato and to continued US involvement in Europe.

"The message this vote sends is clear," he said, "American support for Nato is firm; our leadership for security on both sides of the Atlantic is strong and there is a solid bipartisan foundation for an active US role in the world."

Mr Clinton had earlier described Nato expansion as progress in "realising the dream of a generation - a Europe that is united, democratic and secure for the first time since the rise of the nation states on the European continent".

The US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, who is the daughter of Czech immigrants to the US, welcomed the Senate vote as "a moment of justice, of promises kept, and of a unified Europe begun".

The White House had watched the debate with concern since it opened more than a month ago, worried not that the inclusion of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland would be rejected, but that the Senate might impose a three-year moratorium on further expansion, or restrict US subsidies on weapons sales to the new members.

At the outset there were also complaints from opponents of Nato expansion that the debate was being nudged into odd corners of the Senate timetable to keep it out of the limelight. In the past week, however, the debate was scheduled in continuous sessions, and produced one of the liveliest and spirited Senate debates in years.

Proponents of Nato expansion had argued from the perspective of US obligations to the victims of the Cold War, the vision of a united Europe, and the benefits to US defence companies. Opponents spanned a broad spectrum of opinion, from prominent Russian specialists and left-wing idealists such as Ben Cohen, of Ben & Jerry's ice-cream, who feared Russian pique and the rise of Russian nationalism, to right-wing American isolationists who saw no reason for American engagement in Europe now that the Cold war was over.

The vote, however, which makes the US the fifth country to ratify Nato expansion, suggested that the extent of opposition, at least in Congress, had been exaggerated.



Sacred site: Tipper Gore (right), wife of US Vice President Al Gore, listens to Sarah Netanyahu, wife of Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem yesterday. The Gores are in Israel to mark the country's 50th anniversary. Photograph: Jacqueline Larra/AP

Clinton aide accused

WEBSTER Hubbell, a former Clinton appointee and friend, has been charged with conspiracy, fraud and tax evasion as a result of the Whitewater investigation. He had already served 18 months' for fraud and embezzlement relating to his time as a partner in the law firm for which Hillary Clinton also worked. The new charges relate to alleged evasion of tax payments on legal and consultancy fees paid to Mr Hubbell after he left his job as associate attorney-general in 1994.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

Envoy seized

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin's personal envoy to Chechnya, Valentin Vlasov, was kidnapped in the breakaway region. He had been working to find a lasting settlement with the Chechen leadership. — Reuters, Moscow

El Niño buzz

EL NINO is being blamed for an imminent invasion of rats and bees. Health officials say increased rainfall brought about by the weather phenomenon will encourage rats and speed up the incursion of "killer bees" to California from Central America.

— Reuters, Los Angeles

VW strikes gold as Beetlemania grips America

IN A COUNTRY in love all over again with big cars - not long, low cruisers but those towering sports utilities with room for half a soccer team - there would seem little hope for a nipper from Volkswagen.

But with its new Beetle, VW is striking gold. For reasons that can only be guessed at - nostalgia for the old Beetle of the Seventies, its look that is still bulbous but also sleek, or VW's inspired advertising campaign - the new Beetle is as sought-after here as the Viagra potency pill. It is so hot there is already a black market for them.

"It's been overwhelming to say the least," says Demetrio Merlino of Prey Auto of Greenwich, Connecticut. Since the first cars were shipped from the VW Puebla factory in Mexico last month, Prey has received three that were sold instantly. It has a waiting list of 75 customers, most of whom will have to wait until October for delivery. Other dealers tell similar tales. While the official price for a basic model starts at \$15,200 (£9,500), Prey has been overrun with customers offering to pay thousands more to jump the queue. Mr Merlino refuses such offers, but numerous dealerships around the US are gladly taking the additional mark-up.

There is also evidence of dealers not officially affiliated with VW buying as many Beetles as they can lay their hands on and selling them on at grossly inflated prices. And people are biting, even though buying from non-authorised dealers nullifies the manufacturer's warranty on the car.

And those lucky few who are driving their own Beetles around already are finding that they have an unexpected opportunity to turn them around immediately by selling them second-hand, if only barely, at a handsome profit.

It was a temptation that presented itself to Wally Leach

David Osborne in New York sees an old favourite roar back with a vengeance

of Tennessee, for instance, who paid \$18,000 for his model. Within a few days, he was stopped in a supermarket car-park by a man who offered him \$27,000 for it. And that after someone else had tried to pay him \$23,000. "When I told him 'No', he said, 'Can I give you more?'" Mr Leach recalled.

The original "people's car", the Beetle was first made in Germany in 1939. It arrived in the United States in the 1950s and was a bit largely because it was affordable and easy to run. By the Seventies it had also become an icon of the flower-power revolution.

Although it retains the contours of its forebear, the new Beetle is altogether more modern: it has air conditioning, a real heater (rather than just air circulated over the motor) as well as an engine in the front rather than the rear. It will not be on sale in Europe until autumn.

It is being promoted here with an advertising campaign whose main slogan is "Less Flower, More Power". As well as employing the usual television and billboard strategies, VW has been identifying the hippest parties and events at clubs in New York and Los An-

geles and parking Beetles by the kerb outside.

The Beetle offers a tremendous boost to VW, which has clung on in the North American market during a thin decade when most of its European competitors gave up entirely. It is pushing out as many of the cars from Puebla as it possibly can.

Mr Merlino has no simple explanation for the phenomenon. It may be, however, that the new Beetle is becoming America's must-have-one fashion accessory of the moment; a toy with the chic appeal of a Swatch, but a tad more expensive. "People kind of like it just to have one in their driveway", Mr Merlino offers.

Cuba's American refugees

By Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

TWENTY-FIVE years ago today, Black Panther activist Janine Chesimard was involved in a New Jersey motorway shootout which left one policeman dead and another wounded. Now, she lives freely in Cuba, writes books and receives living expenses from Fidel Castro's government.

Ms Chesimard, now 50 and calling herself Assata Shakur, is one of nearly 100 serious criminals who fled the United States and were granted political asylum by Mr Castro's communist regime. The Clinton administration has asked Cuba

to hand them over but Mr Castro refuses.

New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman on Thursday offered a \$100,000 (£60,000) reward to anyone who brings Ms Chesimard back to complete a life sentence handed down in 1977. She broke out of jail in a daring escape in 1979, when her visitors, former comrades in a militant black group, took a guard hostage.

She is believed to have fled to Cuba in 1984, where she has since become a grandmother and taken a master's degree. She says she did not shoot New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster on 2 May 1973.

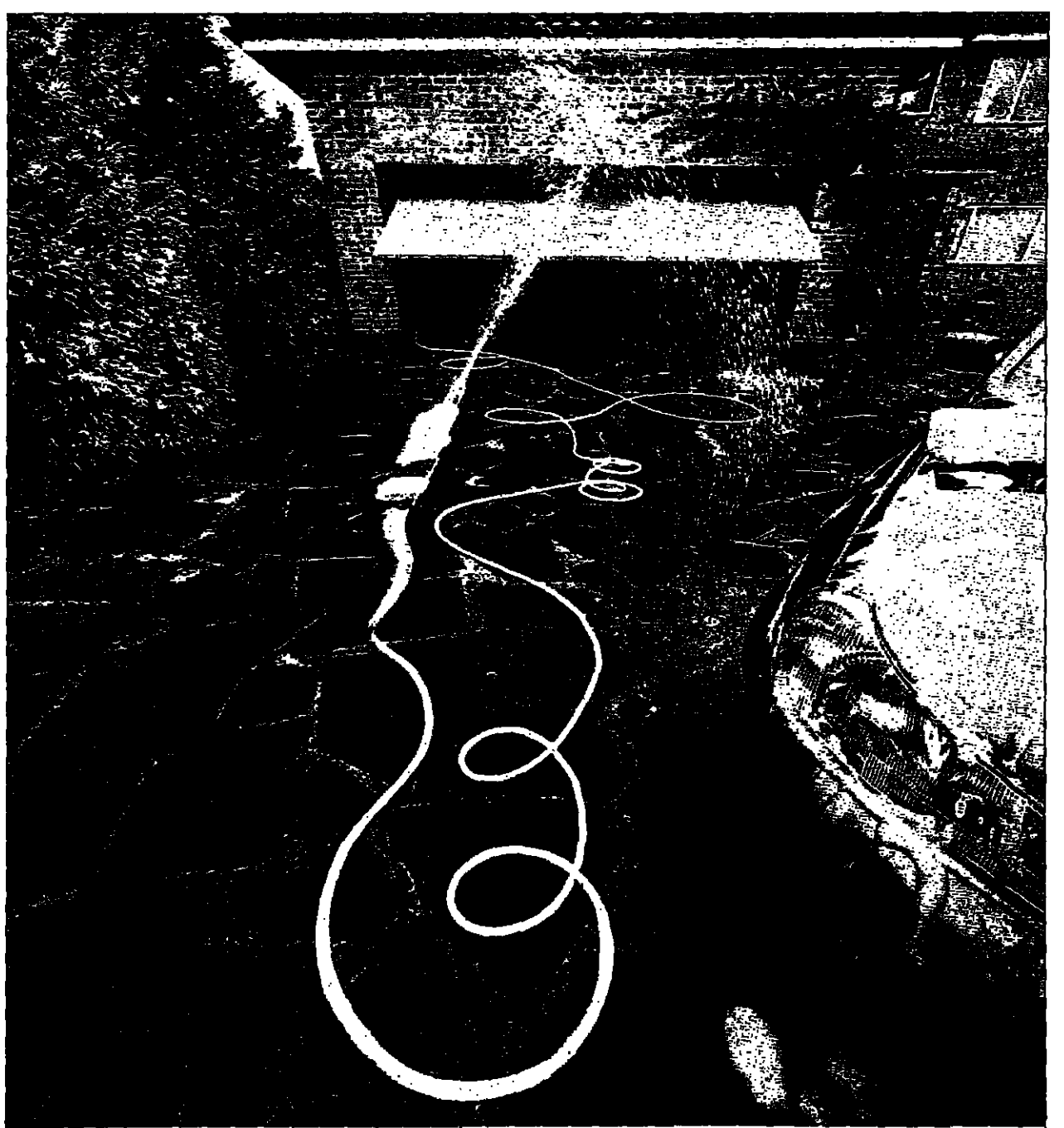
Joining in the campaign to return her and the other American criminals harboured by the Cuban government, New Jersey Republican Congressman Bob Franks described Ms Chesimard as "a cold-blooded cop killer" and said Washington should not consider improving relations with Havana until all the American convicts are returned.

"This is normal behaviour for Fidel Castro, to give safe haven to terrorists, to drug dealers, to cop killers," said Republican Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Cuban-American. In its annual report on international terrorism, published yesterday,

the US State Department listed Cuba among countries harbouring terrorists.

Responding to the calls to return Ms Chesimard, a Cuban government spokesman noted that Havana has no extradition treaty with Washington and did not necessarily believe Ms Chesimard was guilty.

Among the other American convicts in Cuba is former Black Panther William Lee Brent, now 68, who hijacked an American domestic airliner to Cuba in 1969. Cuba first jailed Mr Brent for almost two years, suspecting he may be a CIA agent, but then freed him. He works as a disc jockey and announcer on Cuban state radio.



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State handouts for Mafia men of honour

By Anne Hanley
in Rome

IN 1991, an agricultural labourer, Vito Vitale, met with an accident on a Sicilian farm and was awarded a disability allowance by the state pension fund. On 14 April, seven years and many monthly payments later, the reclusive "invalid" was arrested.

For when Vitale was not arranging for relations to nip down to the post office to pick up his \$200 (£120) cheque for him, he was, so investigators believe, busy being deputy chairman of a multi-national company with an estimated annual turnover of 250 trillion lire: the Mafia (Sicily) Inc.

Needless to say, he was not hampered by an obvious physical handicap. Vitale, reputed to have been the deadliest of Cosa Nostra hitmen, is not the only Italian mobster who has supplemented his income with a little something from the state, according to an unpublished report by the parliamentary Anti-Mafia committee which was leaked in the weekly *Il Mondo*.

Dozens of recipients of state money are named in the report, which suggests that being amongst Italy's 3.5 million invalids on allowances, or the 700,000 people on minimum pensions or income support, is a point of honour for the Mafia's *uomini d'onore* (men of honour).
Mafiosi are by tradition from

country stock. The organisation is still strongly rooted in Sicily's impoverished agricultural hinterland. And like their law-abiding fellow citizens, even the highest-earning hitmen, explosives experts, drug refiners and arms traffickers have an innate conviction that the state is there to be fleeced. In the case of boss of bosses, Salvatore Riina, being seen to be fiddling the state like any local bumpkin was a vital part of his defence: his fury when he was refused an agricultural labourer's pension to see him through his 12 life sentences after his arrest in 1993 knew no bounds.

Others have been more skillful than their one-time chief, managing to juggle prison and

hand-outs. Three of the mafiosi charged with planting a bomb which killed five people and destroyed a wing of Florence's Uffizi Gallery in 1993 are on the pension fund payroll, and two of them are classed as serious invalids.

Still others — like Vitale until two weeks ago — find being on the run from the law no barrier to picking up their cheques.

Conspicuous by his absence from the Anti-Mafia committee report is Bernardo Provenzano, the legendary Mafia chief who dropped out of sight over 30 years ago and is now Italy's most-wanted pensioner. Further investigation may reveal which queue in which Sicilian post office he can be picked up in.



Iranians yesterday mourn the remains of 315 comrades newly repatriated from Iraq where they died in the 1980-88 war Photograph AP

Bidding in Baghdad for a mirror of silver with pockets full of paper

BAGHDAD DIARY



Patrick Cockburn

I spent a frustrating evening trying to buy a silver mirror and a carpet at the al-Baghdadi auction house on the east bank of the Tigris. The prices in both cases were cheap but I found it impossible to go on bidding because they were in Iraqi dinars, now valued at 1,480 to the US dollar. I was confident enough when the auctioneer started the bidding for the mirror at 50,000 dinars. This was cheap. The mirror was pretty and made 50 years

ago in the holy city of Kerbala.

Others, mostly Iraqi antique dealers, liked the mirror too. The bidding was hot. When the auctioneer called out 182,000 dinars I dropped out - 182,000 of anything seemed like too much money. The price was still only \$120, far less than the mirror was worth anywhere outside Baghdad, but I found it impossible to keep putting my hand up because the nominal figure was so high. In private dealings, Iraqis avoid this prob-

lem by using American hundred dollar bills, but not any bill will do. The preferred bill is that issued in 1996 and after with a large picture of Benjamin Franklin on the front. An Iraqi friend said: "A hundred dollars is worth so much to us these days that we can't afford to be taken in by a forgery."

For most purposes Iraqi dinars are necessary. They usually come in bundles of 250 dinar notes and the currency weighs a lot when you change a

hundred dollar bill. Coins are no longer minted because hyper-inflation has made them virtually worthless. When I first went to Iraq in 1977, a dinar was worth around three US dollars.

I stayed at the al-Rashid hotel, the usual haunt of journalists in Baghdad. It still has its mosaic of George Bush with jagged teeth on the floor which you have to step on to get into the lobby. Underneath is the logo: "Bush is Criminal."

The Americans considered bombing the al-Rashid in 1991, ostensibly because they claimed there was an Iraqi command post underneath it. The real reason was that they would have liked to put the satellite dishes used by American television correspondents out of action. In one of the great journalistic bug-outs of all time almost all the American print journalists left Iraq voluntarily before the bombing started. The ground-floor bar of the

hotel was, in fact, accidentally hit by part of a Tomahawk missile brought down by Iraqi anti-aircraft fire. The bar was wrecked. Nobody was injured because Saddam Hussein had summoned an Islamic meeting in solidarity with Iraq in a nearby conference hall. Many of the delegates were staying in the al-Rashid. In deference to their Islamic susceptibilities, the bar had suddenly taken alcoholic drinks off its shelves. Seldom can temperance have saved lives so quickly. When the Tomahawk hit, the bar was completely deserted.

Alcohol has since been banned in hotels and restaurants. But it is available in specially licensed shops. I bought some Bavarian beer and a bottle of Chianti. Something nasty had clearly happened to the latter between Tuscany and Baghdad and it tasted like neat vinegar.

Aside from the George Bush mosaic there is little to see in Baghdad, a city of monuments, to commemorate the Gulf war. An exception is the bronze statue of Saddam beside the Saddam tower in the centre. It is about 15ft tall and at first sight no different from numerous other statues of the Iraqi leader. On closer view, however, you can see the plinth on which the statue stands is covered with engine parts belonging to an American ground-to-ground missile. And on closer view still, the flattened little bronze pancake beside the boots of the statue turn out to be the faces of George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Kipch Bah

of Saudi Arabia, Emir Jabr of Kuwait and, slightly smaller in size, President Mitterrand of France.

In Baghdad, people say the only Iraqis doing well out of the sanctions are black marketers and the farmers. The success of the former is obvious enough. We drove west from Baghdad to Diyala province to see how the farmers were doing. Unlike most Iraqis they can feed themselves and take advantage of the high price of foodstuffs. Beside the Diyala river, we sat in the garden of a successful farmer who agreed he had made money from selling oranges, though he complained the price of grapes had collapsed.

Then he produced x-ray plates. They were of the chest of his 24-year-old cousin Ahmed, who has a weak heart, taken in London 13 years ago. He had not been able to go back for a second operation because of the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf war and then sanctions. We went to another, poorer farm and the same thing happened. The farmer produced an elderly x-ray of the skull of his five-year-old daughter Fatima. She could not stand upright. There was something infinitely touching about these old x-rays. They seemed to symbolize the desperation of ordinary Iraqis over sanctions. The farmers should be better off than the townspeople, but almost of them have at least one relative ill or dying because he or she cannot get proper medical help.

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هكذا من الأصل

Ready for revival:
Rex Lawson with one of his 10,000 perforated pianola scores at his home in London

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz



The maestro of the rolls

"LITTLE perforations" says Rex Lawson, holding the paper lace of a piano roll up to the light. "I tried to get Tetley's to sponsor me once but they wouldn't". Which was silly of them. They'd have been in very good company. Arnold Bennett had a pianola. H G Wells had one. George Bernard Shaw had two. Queen Victoria kept one at Balmoral.

Now wrongly seen as a musical dinosaur, the pianola was once a firm fixture in every parlour. It remains a firm fixture in Rex Lawson's parlour along with his four cats, his three-foot beard and his 10,000 piano rolls who all live together in south-east London. The cellar where he keeps all the fox-trots is cold and rather damp. By a happy coincidence, this is exactly what the fragile paper piano rolls like best: an air-conditioned, centrally-heated cellar would have turned them to dust by now.

Invented at the end of the last century, the pianola allowed great music to be reproduced in the home by anyone with a good set of cat muscles. In some ways the invention was a destructive force in domestic music-making: suddenly you didn't have to spend your time fingering with the piano teacher to play all the right notes. But the pianola was also a force for good in musical education which made it possible to play the finest music in places no concert pianist would ever tread. Paderewski, Rach-

A piece of music too complex for the human performer is being revived with the help of that musical dinosaur, the pianola. Louise Levene gets in tune

maninov and Gershwin, among others, saw the force of this and made recordings direct to pianola. Stravinsky, ever a fan of polyrhythms, was a big enthusiast, but the biggest idea belonged to George Antheil, the Polish-American composer and self-styled "Bad Boy of Music", who rather fancied a massed chorus of pianolas and wrote his 1927 Ballet Mécanique for 17 of them. It has yet to be played as written.

The pianola is automatic only in the sense that, say, a lawn mower is automatic because the results vary enormously depending on the skill of the operator. In the end, Antheil's ambitious project was performed on a mere handful of pianos plus the various bits of percussion and the siren demanded by the score. It is Rex Lawson's earnest wish to stage the piece as Antheil intended but player-piano virtuosos are thin on the ground and without that level of expertise the synchronisation of 17 instruments is a bit of a non-starter.

The most famous exponent of the player-piano was Conlon Nancarrow. Born in Texarkana, Arkansas in 1912 he studied music in Cincinnati and Boston under Roger Sessions and Walter Piston. After fighting the fascists in Spain, Nancarrow was regarded with increasing sus-

picion by the US authorities who suspended his passport, finally causing him to retreat to Mexico in disgust in 1940. He wasn't given a visa to return until 1981. He remained in almost total seclusion, creating music of increasing complexity. Dissatisfaction with an early human performance of one of his compositions led Nancarrow to experiment instead with the tireless precision of the pianola. Over the last decade his

The pianola was a force for good in music which made it possible to play the finest music in places no concert pianist would ever tread

Studies have become hugely fashionable. They were released on CD, some were reorchestrated for live performance by fit young pianists with a streak of musical machismo resolved that they could play the unplayable.

The inevitable emphasis on the complex timing and superhuman speed of Nancarrow's music means that people often lose sight of the sometimes quite everyday influences that underpin it. Just as Stravinsky deconstructed popular musi-

cal forms, many of Nancarrow's Studies are rooted in an everyday dance rhythm such as the tango or boogie woogie. You can't stick to the beat exactly, but you can definitely dance to it. John Cage arranged some early Nancarrow studies for Merce Cunningham in 1960 and it was only a matter of time before Siobhan Davies, famous for her interest in challenging 20th century music, would turn to Nancarrow for inspiration.

Although his work is all available on tape she chose to work with live music and Rex Lawson, who met Nancarrow several times and who regularly performs his work, was the obvious choice.

It was the first time Lawson had worked with dancers and contemporary choreographers' relaxed relationship with their chosen music came as something of a surprise to him. "I thought they danced to phrases, but they don't. She got the dancers to dance within the mu-

sic - she certainly can't get them to dance to the speed of the music, they'd be running around like jellybeans".

For Lawson, the dynamic of the dance mimics the action of the pianola itself. "The ones rushing around were like the notes on the roll and the ones walking round the stage were like the roll itself." Davies's company have been rehearsing to recordings and before Thursday's premiere Lawson was slightly anxious that the switch from taped music to live pianola would prove difficult: "You can never guarantee a pianola's going to sound the same twice. You have to have your eye on the roll."

Lawson's player-piano is equipped with various levers to enable him to humanise the sound. While his legs and feet pump away his fingers and thumbs tweak artistically at the levers like a pinball wizard, regulating the soft and sustaining pedals, varying the speed and adjusting the balance between left and right hand to approximate the pulse that sets apart man from machine.

On Thursday night in Oxford Lawson used all his skill when he accompanied Siobhan Davies's 88 (a reference to the number of keys on a conventional piano). As always with Davies's work, the piece was a

rich blend of perfections. David Buckland's set of steel tubes and pillows was lit by Peter Mumford's remarkable arrangement of sidelights and baby spots which played about the stage like searchlights, colouring the mood and manner of the dance with a succession of green, violet and crimson filters.

As the impossibly rapid glissandi of Study No 25 shiver up and down the treble keys, the dancers move with confidence in the calmer waters of the bass notes. Later Deborah Saxon folds her body back and forth in a ravishing solo to the bluesy triplets of Study No 4 and makes dancing to these fractured rhythms appear the most natural thing in the world. Meanwhile, Rex Lawson, a key contributor to an exhilarating evening, sits alone in the pit while the impossible emanates from the instrument in front of him in a fantastical polyrhythmic stream. Man and machine in perfect harmony.

Wycliffe Swan (01494-512000) 6 May: Edinburgh Festival Theatre (0131 529 6000) 15-16 May: Cambridge Arts Theatre (01223 503333) 22-23 May: Grand Theatre, Blackpool (01253 290190) 29-30 May: Rex Lawson performs various works for pianola at the Jacqueline du Pre Theatre, St Hilda's College Oxford tonight. He is director of The Pianola Institute. Membership enquiries: Mike Davies, 70 Blackheath Park, London SE3 0ET.

Measures that don't add up

THERE'S a character in *Measure for Measure* lewdly dubbed Mistress Overdone. For rather different reasons, Michael Boyd - director of the RSC's new staging of the play - could be nicknamed Mister Overdone. On the evidence of this and his recent *Much Ado*, which swamped that comedy which picture frames and mirrors and other appearance-and-reality symbols, he's a man much given to going too far.

The opening of this *Measure for Measure* is a classic instance of the kind of straining for innovation that's all too common now at the RSC. Other productions have communicated the du-

Striking, yes, but also forced and gimmicky, involving a trite re-juggling of the text.

Distracting comedy is extracted from the fact that the disembodied voice of the Duke starts to address Angelo (a disappointingly diffuse and over-theatrical Stephen Boxer) a few seconds before he arrives and the needle, which predictably gets stuck at the end, has to be put back for his benefit. Angelo smirks when he finds an empty bottle of liquor by the Duke's chair: it's too obvious that he is filling the place of a man he has ceased to respect. In this production, the ruler returns in a double incognito, posing as a friar who is also blind.

In theory, it sounds a smart move to have him tapping about with a cane - an ironic hint that there is a kind of myopia in this overseeing interloper with people's lives that is not pretend. But that idea never comes properly into focus and restricted to tactile contact and the briefest of snatched looks, Glenister can't give much shading to his developing relationship with Clare Holman's forceful, luminous Isabella, who in this staging seems to be sexually awakened rather than disgusted by the Duke's amatory overtures at the end.

The production has some saving graces. Fluttering his eyelashes in the kind of come-on that's a mocking put-down, Jimmy Chisholm brings a terrific epicene irreverence and grinning *schadenfreude* to the Pompey. But Tom Piper's wooden set, which concentrates the action on the central area of the main stage, has the characters rushing up and down a steep sweeping staircase for no better reason than that it happens to be there. And the surprise armed take-over with which the Duke here resumes power seems typical of a production that goes to show exaggerated lengths without quite getting the play's intellectual measure.

Paul Taylor



Shows: Robert Glenister and Clare Holman in 'Measure for Measure' Photograph: Bob Collier

DAVID LISTER'S ARTS DIARY

THIS column was no prize for poetic correctness. OK, this column wins no prizes, period. But it is becoming increasingly hard to see any reason other than political and literary correctness for the £30,000 Orange Prize for Fiction. The women-only award was established three years ago to bring attention to female authors. With the pages of Company magazine featuring a group of twentysomething women novelists commanding six-figure book deals, Helen Fielding's benign gaze continuing to look down from the upper reaches of the bestsellers lists where Bridget Jones has taken up residence and the reigning Booker winner of the female gender, it's unclear how much of a battle really needs to be fought here.

But the shortlist itself does not suggest a crisis of unappreciated women striving to make their mark in a male-dominated literary world. Pauline Melville is on the list for a book that has already won the Whitbread first novel award; Carol Shields is a hugely successful Pulitzer Prize winner. This suggests a confusion of purpose among the prize's organisers. The broadcaster Sheena McDonald, who is chairing the judges this year, said: "It's a very rich

shortlist..." I guess she may have been referring to the wealth of talent, but on the other hand...

MEETING the balletomane, Lord Earwell on Tuesday as he was appointed chairman of the Royal Ballet, I was reminded of his deliberations last year on "real" and "disguised" unemployment. The former Labour economics spokesman in the Lords had claimed the true level of unemployment was 12, not six per cent, as people doing jobs below their potential - such as an accountant selling hamburgers - were not in "real" employment.

He has plenty of scope for further research at Covent Garden. There is the sacked director of sales Keith Cooper earning a crust as a waiter; the former chief executive Mary Allen tending her garden; a deposed box office manager running a record shop.

Even Lord Earwell, it seems, as Royal Ballet chairman and president of Queens College, Cambridge, is not in what he sees as the most "real" employment. "When I see old pals carrying their red ministerial boxes, I do feel a bit envious," he told me a little forlornly.

THE revival of Peter Shaffer's farce, *Black Comedy*, has prompted many memories in print of the original Sixties production at the National Theatre. There have been many references to the young Maggie Smith, Albert Finney and Derek Jacobi in the original cast; but none to the lightly-gifted actress who played the fluffily deb in the show, Louise Purnell. She was a mainstay of Laurence Olivier's company, portraying a definitive Abigail in *The Crucible* among many other roles. But she left acting for domesticity, and with no film successes seems to get forgotten whenever critics reminisce in print.

WHEN *Sliding Doors* had its premiere on Monday it was noted that the Arts Council had refused to give the movie any lottery money. It's far from being the Arts Council's only failure to pick a winner. In his new history of the council, Richard Witts reveals that it turned up its collective nose some years back when urged to invest in Cameron Mackintosh's new venture.

The worthies on the council laughed heartily at the preposterous idea. Whoever heard of making a musical out of TS. Eliot's cat poems?

ROBERT HANKS' WEEK IN RADIO

"THINGS fall apart, the centre cannot hold," wrote Yeats; and how very wrong he was. At present, the centre is holding so bloody well that it looks as if there won't be anything else left within a few years, not only in politics but in radio.

Talk radio is converging with music radio, radio is converging with television, and the stations are all converging with each other.

At any rate, new "bi-media" departments now reign at the BBC (so the people who make *Watchdog* and *Esther* will now also be in charge of all the features at Radio 4 - inspires you with confidence, no?), and TV personalities (Martin Bashir, Peter Snow) abound in the new schedules. Meanwhile Radio 3 seems to be trying to disguise itself as Radio 2 to escape its creditors, and Radio 4's new party-piece is its spot-on imitation of Radio 5. You notice this most with *Broadcasting House*, Four's new Sunday morning current affairs chat-show - not simply because of the presence of Eddie Mair, a *Five* Live alumnus, but because it has the free-form, time-filling feel of so much of Radio 5.

The show's most notable innovation has been its glance at the front pages: where other current affairs programme

will give you the headlines, *Broadcasting House* will also give you the plugs for inside features. Since Mair doesn't seem to open the paper to actually read these features, this must be one of the least labour-intensive services offered by any radio programme, as well as one of the least useful.

More interestingly, on Monday, fiction seemed to converge on reality: in *On the Whole It's Been Jolly Good*, a monologue written by Peter Tinniswood to mark Maurice Denham's 60th year in broadcasting, the actor played Sir Plympton Makepeace, a Tory buffoon from the Shires who after 60 years marking time as a backbencher has just lost his seat to one of Blair's babes. Makepeace is a self-indulgent, lazy and not especially intelligent man with few, if any, convictions.

His one contribution to political life was a bill to outlaw traffic on roads frequented by badgers; and he managed to go through the 1980s without registering Margaret Thatcher as anything but "That woman with the loud voice - I think she was the Prime Minister, but to me she looked more like a power-mad swimming baths attendant".

On the other hand, he is kind enough, as long as it doesn't interfere with his pleasures (he is a connoisseur of what he calls "dalliance", and an enthusiastic train-spotter); it is his proud boast that in all his time in Parliament he has done no harm to anybody.

Perhaps it was just Denham's shrewd, energetic performance, but this seemed more concentrated and thoughtful than most of Tinniswood's work - allowing the listener to see the damaging apathy of this sort of genteel reaction, but also to see that there are worse sorts of damage.

It made an intriguing pairing with *Collapse of Stour Party*. Sir Julian Critchley's daily readings from his autobiography. Not that Sir Julian is as idle and feckless as Sir Plympton; but in Friday's fantasy of how he would have played the last Tory leadership election had he still been in Parliament (hinting support to every candidate, and in return being dined and flattered to the limits of his capacity), there was something of the same modest sensuality, the same humorous scepticism about himself and the business of politics, and the same very reprehensible, but likeable frivolity.

Bonnard at the Tate

'Captivating' *Times*
'Wonderful' *Financial Times*
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Why's he a dirty Harry?

Woody Allen's latest film explores the world of the serial adulterer.

Annabel Ferriman reports on illicit sex

PRESIDENT CARTER did it in his heart, President Mitterrand did it in secret, President Clinton did it in the Oval Office and Alan Clark did it everywhere - adultery seems as popular today as a meal out at a restaurant or a night out at the movies. Why can't some men confine their sexual activities to the marital bed?

In this weekend's top grossing film, *Deconstructing Harry*, Woody Allen plays the part of a serial adulterer, who gets through three wives and a 25-year-old mistress, and isn't faithful to any of them. Indeed, Harry Block, the eponymous hero, not only sleeps around but specialises in taboo relationships: he sleeps with a patient of his second wife (she is an analyst), the sister of his third wife and, finally, an acolyte more than 30 years his junior.

It is a portrait of a sexual compulsive, of someone constantly seeking out new relationships, who knows it will end in tears, but cannot stop himself. The unsatisfactory nature of his life is forcibly brought home to him when he finds that he has nobody to accompany him to a ceremony in his honour at his old university. He ends up taking a prostitute.

If adultery is so complicated, unsatisfactory and dangerous, why do men do it? Evidence suggests that plenty of them do. Figures vary from 10 to 75 per cent of men with live-in partners, depending on the type of questionnaire used. Telephone surveys apparently produce low numbers (possibly because the partner is in the room during the phone call) while magazine quizzes produce high numbers (men boasting?).

The *National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles*, financed by the Wellcome Trust, covering 20,000 adults and using validated sociological methods, showed that 4.5 per cent of married men had been unfaithful in the preceding year, while 15 per cent of co-habiting men had been unfaithful (the figures for women were 1.9 and 8.2 per cent respectively).

Dr Susan Marchant-Haycox, a London psychologist, puts forward four main reasons for adultery: fear of commitment "most men and women seek commitment in a relationship, but they also fear it"; poor sex in marriage, which may affect about one third of couples; competition (men resenting partners being more successful on the work front and

turning to adultery to boost their egos) and curiosity.

Paul, a 48-year-old divorcee who works in television, admits to having been a serial adulterer over the 23 years that he was married. He started sleeping with other women because he and his wife were sexually incompatible. "There was something fundamentally wrong in my marriage. Passion was missing. I did not get to a level of fulfilment with my wife that I realised that I could achieve with other women. I had already started an affair with someone else before I even got married, and when my future wife found out about it, she

gave me an ultimatum - either we got married or we split up. I decided to get married.

"Then we just let things drag on. In an ideal world, one recognises that there is a problem and finds a way of dealing with it. But we neither sought help nor separated. 'We both wanted children and I made a big effort after our daughter was born to make a go of things - not to be unfaithful and to develop other interests. I was faithful for several years but I was unhappy.'

Paul says that he married too young - he was 22 - and Dr Marchant-Haycox says that adultery is particularly common among men who become hus-

bands at an early age. "They want to relive their youth, trying to have a young man's life they never had. They seek sexual adventure."

Dr Janet Reibstein, a psychologist practising in Cambridge and London and author of several books on sex and relationships, feels that men like the Harry Block character in *Deconstructing Harry* are suffering from a narcissistic disorder, which often turns into a sexual disorder.

"They want gratification for themselves, instead of entering into a reciprocal relationship. They cannot achieve intimacy. They are after personal grati-

fication above all. They feel depleted and unstimulated when their relationship is going through a lull or a low spot. They will say 'this relationship is not working' and seek erotic stimulation to make themselves feel better."

Dr Reibstein, who presented the Channel 4 series *Love Life*, was pessimistic about Harry Block's prognosis, however. "There are an awful lot of analysts who would say that extreme narcissistic disorders cannot be treated," she explains.

Are Harry Block and other adulterers just doing what a lot of men would like to do, but are

prevented from doing by their consciences and beliefs? Apparently not, according to Dr Reibstein. When researching her book, *Sexual Arrangements*, she discovered that a man or woman's religious and ethical beliefs had little to do with their behaviour. "Whether or not someone disapproved of adultery did not seem to influence whether or not they committed it," she adds.

Paul's own belief did not stop him from adultery. "I felt terrible guilt because I had been brought up as a strict Christian. More than once I made an effort to get to grips with the situation and give up

my dalliances, but it never lasted," he says.

"People either consciously or subconsciously shut their eyes to things they do not want to see. My wife chose not to recognise what was happening, except when it was put directly in her path. I am in a faithful relationship now, but I still find women desperately interesting - their looks, their minds, their bodies. Maybe I am a sex addict or maybe it is just that I find women fascinating. But if you are sexually satisfied and fulfilled, it is like an aesthetic pleasure. You can enjoy looking at women, but you don't have to do anything about it."



Harry's game: Woody Allen plays a man who can't remain faithful to anyone, in *Deconstructing Harry*

The Briton bringing hope to Death Row

DOWN in Texas they tell you straight. "You ain't seen nothing like Death Row. That's where they keep the evil."

It is the ante-room to Hell, the dead zone where convicted murderers sit out their final years with only the prospect of freedom from their earthly guilt to look forward to. And it is not just in Texas but also in 12 other US states where the death penalty is used with gusto. It is law in a further 25 states, although they do not exercise it.

Those on the outside, mainly relatives of crime victims, but also a large swathe of the public, say that being sentenced to death by gas chamber, electric chair or lethal injection is too good for the inmates. America is a country fuelled by retribution. Next week, one young English lawyer will embark on

a three-month stint to try to help stem this tide of revenge.

Owen Williams, a 25-year-old trainee solicitor from Purley in Surrey, is flying to New York to work alongside George Kendall, one of the biggest guns in the Death Row defence arsenal, who works for the Legal Defense Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the longest established civil rights organisation in America.

He has won his placement against the odds. His application was viewed alongside those of considerably older and more established and experienced solicitors and barristers, yet he won through.

No doubt his sharply focused philosophy on life impressed the judges. Mr Williams's father committed

suicide when he was 17, an event which brought home to him the sanctity of human life.

"Before then I was far more blasé about things, but that kind of experience is not a great thing for a kid four months before his A-levels," Mr Williams says. "My fervent belief that human life is sacred flowed directly from the death of my father. I didn't wake up the day after we put him in the ground and say 'this is what I want to do with my life', but it was a turning point."

"To see a civilised society like America slaying its citizens is abhorrent to me. I cannot imagine anything worse and I can't sit around and let this happen to people."

Worthy and committed as all this sounds, he is about to touch down for the first time in an unforgiving land where 70



Owen Williams: deep personal conviction Jay Williams

per cent of the population favour the death penalty, where no politicians running for office dare to publicly oppose it and where TV evangelists scream for justice through the Lord (via the electric chair).

Since 1976 6,180 people have been sentenced under the

death penalty. Of those, about 450 have been executed, all men save two women, one of whom, Karla Faye Tucker, was given a lethal injection in February amid the glare of the world's media.

Discounting those who have died natural deaths in

prison and those whose sentences have been commuted to life or overturned, there are 3,600 people waiting on Death Row today who will spend an average of 11 years behind bars before their execution. Texas and Louisiana are way out in front. Together they put to death up to 10 people a month. Texas alone executed 37 male prisoners last year, the same number as in the rest of the US combined.

Death Row might be ready for Owen Williams, but he fears he is not quite ready for it. "It is going to be scary being there in a cell with a man whose future is in my hands, and if I don't do everything I can he will die - and even if I do everything I can he may also die," said Mr Williams. However, such visits may be rare, as he will mainly be working on federal appeals,

arguing that particular cases are unconstitutional.

He may find the blood-thirsty free Americans scarier than the convicts but he has his arguments for clemency down pat. "I do not deny that many of the people on Death Row are guilty but some are innocent and many of them are educationally subnormal and mentally disturbed. Some are juveniles and others have not had the benefit of a decent standard of legal representation. I accept that victims' families have suffered a huge loss - I'm fortunate I have never lost anyone to violent crime - but it cannot be right to take the lives of such people," he said.

Part of the reason Mr Williams will be working with the NAACP is that the death penalty in America is predominantly the plight of poor blacks. A study by Professor David Baldus in Georgia in the 1980s found that a black man convicted of killing a white man was 10 times more likely to be executed than a white man who has killed a black man.

There is no legal aid. Poor defendants on trial are entitled either to be assigned a public defender or a state appointed attorney, who will have tendered for the work for next to nothing. Rates as low as \$1.40 (90p) an hour have been known.

It is a point that ruffles Mr Williams. "If you take the OJ Simpson case, had he been poor and only able to afford a state attorney, he might have been found guilty and, because the victims were white, he would probably have got the death penalty."

Matthew Brace

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JULIE FORSYTH, PROMOTIONS MANAGER

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SELFRIDGES

هكذا من الأصل

When wine leaves a sour taste

You shouldn't have to be an expert to feel confident about sending back a bottle you are not enjoying, writes Richard Ehrlich

YOU HAVE placed your wine order and the bottle arrives. You are chosen to perform the ritual of tasting it. You lift glass to lips, take a sip, and try politely to restrain the gagging reflex. It tastes like lighter fluid.

What happens next is up to you. You must decide whether to complain, and how far to take it. A mild query? A bold refusal to drink or pay? As we supposed to become a nation of restaurant-sophisticates, the question of complaining about wine remains as thorny as ever.

Not that wine writer and television presenter Alice King and her husband Nick Davies had any doubts about what to do. Yesterday, it emerged that Miss King, author of the *Hamlyn Atlas of Wine*, has been banned from a restaurant in Marlborough, Wiltshire, after she complained and would not pay for a £16 bottle of Beaujolais, because it "lacked fruit and tasted dried out".

They stood their ground, and at one point the row became so heated that other customers, who were asked their opinion of the wine by the manager, backed the restaurant and urged the King party to pay up. Another diner, who liked the wine, even chased Miss King and her party down the street, hurling abuse.

So, how can such a dispute be settled? The law on wine (and food) in restaurants is quite clear, being governed by the Trade Description Act (1968) and Sale of Goods Act (1979), among other acts of Parliament. The goods must be of satisfactory quality, fit for the purpose and as described on the menu. But problems abound despite that apparent simplicity. Customer says: "my wine tastes like something poured from a fish tank." Waiter says: "this wine is delicious." Who's right?

There is one clear case in which wine may be returned: when it's "corked", tainted by a fungus that occurs naturally

in some cork trees. Corked wine is akin to rancid butter or shoes with a hole in the toe - clearly unfit for use. It's worth noting, however, that I've watched people drink corked wine and not notice the fact.

The problems are trickier when the wine is alleged merely to be not as good as it should be, as in the case of Miss King, or when customers order the wrong bottle out of sheer ignorance - "We didn't know Cava has bubbles" - or when they simply decide that they don't like it. When it's a simple question of not liking the stuff, the law would be on the restaurant's side.

But the restaurateurs I talked to were unanimous in proclaiming a generous attitude, even when the customer is wrong. Georgina Thompson, of London restaurant 755, says they get a complaint once every couple of months. "If there's a genuine fault with the bottle," she points out, "we can always send it back to the supplier. And if there isn't anything wrong with it, it's better to have a satisfied customer than one who is not. Satisfied customers come back."

Michael Gottlieb, proprietor of the Smollensky restaurants and Café Spice Namaste in London, agrees with that point of view. "It doesn't happen often, but when people complain about a bottle we replace it without question. And sometimes give a couple of glasses of free dessert wine just to make sure they are happy. Our first priority is to look after customer."

That is also the view of Barry Phillips, of the White Horse in Chilgrove, West Sussex. His list, one of the most extensive in the country, includes dozens of bottles of great rarity and antiquity. So he does have to contend with complaints about expensive wines - and they seem to be delivered in the nicest possible way.

"We had to take back three bottles of La Tache '71", he recalls. "I think it cost £300 the

last time we sold it. One bottle was out of condition, yet the customer insisted on paying part of the price. Another bottle was bought by someone who tasted it and said, 'I don't mind paying, but do I have to drink it?'"

Friendly customers make it easy to be gracious, but despite the higher sums at stake, the White Horse policy mirrors Gottlieb's. "We want people to be happy and comfortable. Someone sent back a magnum of Krug '79 (around £350) because he thought it was flat, and we accepted it."

I hope you never find yourself in Alice King's position. But if you do, there are four points to bear in mind. First, you have to decide how much palaver you are going to tolerate in making your complaint. Some people, faced with a waiter who refused to take back a bottle, would give up - or just deduct the service charge, which is their legal right.

Second, in making your complaint, deliver it quietly and without pretence. "Waiters hate customers who show off," says one hard-bitten veteran. Third, if you think the wine is in that legal grey area - not really spoiled, but not nice to drink - make it clear that you understand this is a matter of opinion. And if it's a perfectly good bottle but just not to your taste, throw yourself on the waiter's mercy.

The fourth point arises only when fisticuffs are threatened: when the restaurant won't back down, and neither will you. As Gottlieb says: "If you are a customer and you believe you are right, stick to your guns. Tell the restaurateur: 'It's my right not to pay for wine I think is faulty. I am not going to pay, and I'll see you in court.'"

That approach will not make your evening a relaxed one but it will make it interesting.

Richard Ehrlich is drink writer on *The Independent on Sunday* and recently won the *Glenfiddich* award for drink writer of the year.



The nose has it: And if it doesn't smell right, send it back

Photograph: Phillip Meech

BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE TIPPLE

Two thirds of the adult population of Britain drink wine - more than twice as many drinkers of any other alcoholic drink.

The British spend £5.85bn on wine each year, £2.82bn of which is spent while dining out.

Around 678m litres of wine were sold in Britain in 1996 - a rise of 16 per cent since 1992.

Red and rosé wines have overtaken whites in popularity, with their sales expanding by 55 per cent since 1992. By the year 2001, they will account for 55 per cent of the market.

German white wine remains the single most popular choice - Portuguese is least popular.

British wines account for only 4.2 per cent of sales.

The biggest drinkers of wine are aged between 35 and 44 years old.

The wine market is forecast to rise by 25 per cent by the year 2001.

Around 9.8m cases of wine are imported from France each year, a result of their negligible duty on alcohol.

Only 6.6 per cent of the wine-drinking public choose non-alcoholic varieties.

Source: Mintel

Row

Twelve months later he's still man of the moment

In our final article, Colin Brown says that Tony Blair is putting a very personal stamp on his premiership

LABOUR



1 YEAR ON



TONY BLAIR was in a relaxed mood at the leaving party in Number 10 this week for Tim Allen, one of his press office team, who reflected on the "gaffes" of the year.

They included the report of the change in the Blair hairdo, a "scoop" for the *Financial Times*. Mr Blair could afford to enjoy the joke at his expense - by common consent, from his ministerial colleagues to his severest critics on Labour's left wing, he has had a remarkably successful year. "It has been Tony's year," said one.

Some of the "gaffes" were of Labour's own making, but Mr Blair has suffered no permanent damage from the pre-emptive attack over Bernie Ecclestone's £1m and party funding. He successfully put that behind him and went on to speak for the country on the death of the Princess of Wales. He also captured the moment at the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which he had personally been responsible for brokering to bring the hope of peace to Northern Ireland.

It was not a moment for soundbites, he said. But he felt

the "hand of history" on his shoulder. Those telling lines, delivered with an actor's skill, again captured the moment.

Cabinet figures dismiss reports that he has been humiliating some ministers in front of the rest of the Cabinet. "He doesn't do that. It's just not his style. He can be challenging, but he doesn't humiliate colleagues," said one senior Cabinet source.

"Absolutely outstanding," was how one seasoned apparition described Mr Blair's performance over the past 12 months. "He is an outstanding Prime Minister, probably better than Wilson and Macmillan and Thatcher."

"The only question is about his strategic view - we still don't really know where he stands, on the welfare state, Europe, or trade union recognition."

Mr Blair's close Cabinet colleagues deny that charge. One said he had made up his mind some time ago what the Government would be saying on trade union recognition; the ministers and the trade unions would follow. His friends say he

has continued to lead from the front, exercising his authority on the Chancellor on the approach to the European single currency.

"I've seen them all - Wilson, Macmillan, Thatcher, Major - and he's right up there with them," said another veteran Labour left-winger. "He hasn't got Wilson's memory; he is a peace-maker, he doesn't go for the jugular, but he is brilliant at Prime Minister's question time."

Mr Blair was advised by one regular Labour voice at the weekly sessions of Prime Minister's questions to "tighten" his approach to William Hague. "He was sounding ratty, so I told him not to take Hague so seriously. It seems to have worked. He is much more relaxed now."

He was in the tearoom last week, jollying the troops after Prime Minister's questions. "They are in awe of him," said another Labour MP about the new intake of '97. Even some of the press who bawled John Major with tough questions find Mr Blair difficult to fault.

"He seems to be giving you

the honest answer you wanted, but you have to listen carefully to the words. Then you realise that he isn't answering the question at all. He's just slipped off," said one television reporter.

Mr Blair has been keen to avoid the mistakes of his predecessors and has been assiduous in keeping close ties with the Labour backbench. Regular receptions at Number 10 for groups of more than 20 Labour MPs, hosted by Clive Soley, the chairman of the PLP, are not polite photo opportunities with tea and sympathy. "They ask tough questions," said a senior Labour source.

His candid, semi-conversational style in public is an important factor in convincing his own side that Mr Blair is sincere. "Even his harshest critics have a sneaking admiration for him," said another Labour MP.

In his next reshuffle, before the summer, he will promote the ministers he wants in his Government and sack the failures. That is when the country will learn more about the Prime Minister.

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Mary Bell: time to step back

A NEW LAW to stop criminals profiting from their crimes should not be "beyond the wits of parliamentary draughtsmen", says the Attorney General, John Morris. Well, they are clever people, these parliamentary draughtsmen. Although there is already such a law, banning such cashing-in within six years of the crime, extending it is a tough assignment. It is a moral conundrum that would tax the wisdom of Solomon, not just the textual skills of a legal wordsmith.

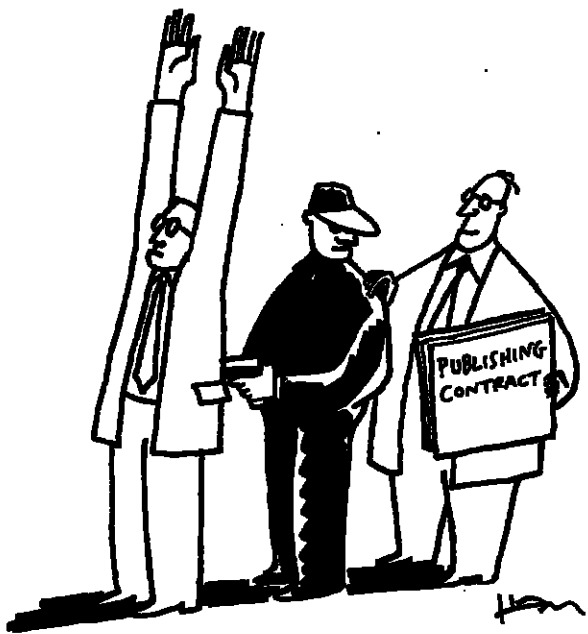
Mary Bell has already given her name to a part of common law, the so-called "Mary Bell order", which prevents the identification of a child, in her case, her child, now that she has changed her name. Now the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Attorney General have combined to suggest that she should have an Act of Parliament named after her. Perhaps it should be called the Mary Bell (Profit from Crimes) (Prevention in Perpetuity) Act, 1998. It is disappointing that our political leaders should reflect our national confusions and hypocrisies rather than seeking to make sense of them and offering moral leadership.

Compare public attitudes to Mary Bell and Leslie Grantham. Bell, a deeply damaged child, became a murderer at the age of 11. Grantham, a soldier in Germany, shot a taxi driver dead during an attempted robbery. Her crime is still "live", 30 years on, capable of tainting anything that comes into contact with it, particularly money. His crime, committed at around the same time, is "spent", and only lends a faintly glamorous hue to his reputation as a hard-man actor. Sure, he is a good actor, and 405 episodes of *EastEnders* as Dirty Den would have made him a national figure anyway, but there was added cachet for his tabloid persona, that strange mixture of soap fiction and soap reality, from the fact that he was a convicted murderer. It would take a particularly skilled parliamentary draughtsman to devise a law which could identify and sequester that proportion of Mr Grantham's earnings which is attributable to the publicity generated by his crime.

The problem is that we are prone to sentimentality when it comes to salt-of-the-earth, gone-straight-now villains. "Mad" Frankie Fraser, not just a murderer but - in his day - an evil torturer and butcher, is advertising some drink or other. Anyone associated with the Krays or the Great Train Robbers is seen as a harmless reformed hoodlum, respectful of their mothers, who only ever hurt their own kind.

Mary Bell's crime still seems so evil because it is so hard to understand. Mr Grantham's crime, on the other hand, is easy to understand, a straightforward piece of villainy. Yes, her victims were children, and crimes against children are more abhorrent than those against adults. But the moral judgement in comparing the two crimes surely needs to focus on the ages of the perpetrators. Bell was herself a child. The extent of her culpability is arguable: we should of course be sceptical of her own account, as told to Gitta Sereny, of the abuse she suffered as a child - especially, in the light of what we now know about "recovered" memories, the sexual abuse. But Mr Grantham's culpability is clear-cut. He was an adult, when he knowingly shot an innocent man.

On any dispassionate reckoning, her crime is more "spent" than his. She should not profit from it - not that, in the broader sense, she has, having only succeeded in flipping herself and her daughter into misery. This should be an opportunity to reflect on our attitude to old crimes. Instead of giving tacit encouragement to tabloid harassments, the Government should be trying to lead the debate into cooler, more rational waters. It is true that time does not always heal, and that some crimes can never be for-



gotten and forgiven. In the worst cases, it is worth pursuing war criminals, 50 years on. It was also right to punish Eric Taylor, the 78-year-old Roman Catholic priest, convicted this week, who sexually abused children at his orphanage in the Sixties. It was right yesterday to send Edward Kelly down for life for kicking a man in the head. The judge did not like it, but the sentence was automatic under Michael Howard's "two strikes and you're out" law because Kelly had shot and injured someone in a robbery 19 years ago.

The most important lesson of the Mary Bell case is not that "crime should not pay". The lesson that matters is that rehabilitating criminals is a delicate and difficult business, which requires all of us, and politicians especially, to make considered moral judgements, case by case, rather than hiding behind popular clichés.

Black-cool irony

IS BLACKPOOL tacky? The people who run the Golden Mile pleasure beach are certainly worried that we might think so. Apparently, this is the fault of the BBC, which made an unfattering fly-on-the-wall programme about our most famous resort. "That wretched documentary shoved us back into the Dark Ages again as unsophisticated, brash, Northern entertainment," says Amanda Thompson, whose 95-year-old grandmother runs the family firm.

The Prime Minister is also to blame, kiss-me-quick hats and black pudding being deemed too Old Britannia for New Labour. "Suddenly they're too posh to come to Blackpool when they get power," Miss Thompson laments bitterly. But Blackpool is fighting back, using Labour's chosen weapon, public relations. We don't know which well-paid consultant suggested tipping a load of sand on London Euston's soulless marble concourse, but as a stunt it draws attention to the new attractions.

It is tempting to say that they sound remarkably similar to the old attractions - "live entertainment", "hot ice" shows. It certainly does not add up to a "New Black-cool". But nor should it. There are some things that we have to accept are simply impervious to the attentions of the image makers. The only thing Blackpool can do is to wait for the attentions of ironic post-modernists. It can then exploit a dual market - the traditional if declining Wakes weekers Northern workers and a second, complementary group, whose palates have become jaded with the tastes of Tuscany and Provence and would welcome the invigoration and novelty of a bag of chips on the tram.



The Venetian Lagoon, from which the city arose and into which it could sink again - see letter below right

Photograph: Sponphoto

Gays and the church

THE REV Guy Davies (letter, 28 April) opposes homosexual behaviour, but fails to admit the existence of homosexual people. I spent over 30 years trying to make myself fit the Church's traditional framework of sexual teaching and the more I tried, the more my gay feelings came through, even though I never put them into practice. Eventually the discovery of a genetic link with gayness opened my eyes: I was fighting my own nature and trying to correct the way God made me.

A good God cannot have created in us a powerful gay sex drive just to punish us for acting on it. For me therefore it follows that the few Bible passages (none from Christ) condemning gay conduct reflect a heterosexual attitude, not the mind of God.

Mr Davies asks us to look wider and see that the Bible's teaching throughout is consistent that sex is for married male/female couples only. But the Bible's teaching throughout is consistent that the earth is stationary and flat. Science has since shown us that God made the earth a moving ball and that he made some people gay. These discoveries change our perspective.

"God made all human beings in his own image" means homosexuality is part of that image as well as heterosexuality. "Love your neighbour as yourself" calls for equal treatment of gays here and now. And "First remove the block from your own eye" requires Church leaders to start the process.

TIM BEACH
London SE25

THE REV Guy A Davies (letter, 28 April) states that sex is for married couples alone and that the church is being cowed by the homosexual lobby. May one ask to which marriage he may refer - the first, second or perhaps even third?

Being cowed by the "second marriage" lobby is possibly a lot more popular among church members, and sitting in the pews with serial adulterers a lot less uncomfortable than letting in gays.

ROBERT SENECA
London EC1

THE REV Neil Dawson uses your columns to vilify the Maranatha Community (letter, 20 April). We have never met him. We are not "shadowy" as he suggests. We are a free and open movement. We are not "right-wing" as he suggests. We are a rapidly growing community of thousands of Christians drawn from every political persuasion and Christian denomination.

DENNIS WRIGLEY
Community Leader
Maranatha Community
Manchester

ACCORDING to the Rev Neil Dawson's letter (28 April), Leviticus 18:22 merely forbids homosexuality as "ritually unclean" and therefore is not a timeless moral principle. However, if we take Leviticus 18 as a whole we see that the chapter is concerned to forbid Israel from engaging in illicit sexual practices that were known among the Canaanite nations. The chapter prohibits various kinds of incest and bestiality. Presumably Mr Dawson would condemn both incest and bestiality. Why the special pleading for homosexuality?

The word translated "abominations" in Leviticus 18 does not only deal with matters of ritual impurity but also with moral evil. The same word is used to describe child sacrifice and idolatry in Deuteronomy 18.

The teaching an sexual morality in Leviticus 18 is not repealed in the

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New Testament. Paul explicitly condemns both lesbianism and homosexuality in Romans 1:26ff. Homosexual practices are clearly contrary to the teaching of the whole Bible. It is the business of the church to both proclaim God's judgement against all sin and to offer people of all sexual orientations the forgiveness and wholeness that Jesus Christ offers us in the gospel.

THE REV GUY A DAVIES
Sturminster Newton, Dorset

Hear Mary Bell's cry

IN YOUR leading article about Mary Bell (30 April) you state "We have learned nothing from the book that would stop such crimes happening." This is not the case.

If people who have been similarly abused read Gitta Sereny's book or excerpts they will realise they are not alone. They will be given a language to use to describe their abuse and permission to express it. This is the first step towards them seeking help and thus breaking the cycle of abused to abuser.

We may not want to hear about this abuse but our deaf ears are the ones to which Mary and many thousands of others have directed their unheard cries in the past. It is our responsibility to learn how to listen.

DR MARION WELLS
Essex

Beef-on-the-bone peril

JACK CUNNINGHAM was absolutely right to protect the public from the dangers of BSE-infected bone marrow. It is most unfortunate that the powerful meat and farming lobbies are attempting to overturn this wise precaution ("Farmers hail court ruling over beef on bone case", 22 April), and unfortunately too that the public are largely kept in the dark about the case to be made for the ban.

There are actually very good scientific grounds for this ban: • The transmissible spongiform encephalopathies show a concentration of infectivity in the nervous and lymphoid tissue, including the bone marrow.

• Infectivity is found in the nerves and lymphoid tissue at an early stage in the infection, before it is detectable in the brain. Infected bone marrow could be present in the cattle aged under 30 months currently being eaten.

• When beef is cooked on the bone, any infectivity will be spread throughout the meat and the gravy - it is not sufficient to avoid eating the marrow itself.

• The absurdly low level of risk

bandied about now has almost certainly come from the Ministry of Agriculture (Maff) via the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee, and Maff has a record of consistently making unjustifiably optimistic assumptions of risk. The calculations are very difficult, and in truth nobody really knows.

The right time to lift the ban on beef-on-the-bone would be when a test for BSE, not available at present, was able to demonstrate with confidence that our food was no longer contaminated by a potentially lethal and currently incurable disease.

ADRIAN HOLME
London N7

DR H C GRANT (letter, 25 April) gives the mistaken impression that antibiotic residues are present in milk and advises readers to buy produce from organic farmers.

Dairy cows receive antibiotics when there is a need to treat illness, for example mastitis, and this is done under veterinary supervision. By law, milk produced by treated cows must be withheld from the bulk supply for an appropriate length of time to ensure that the milk is free from antibiotics. Milk is routinely tested at all stages, from farm to dairy, and there are heavy financial penalties for farmers whose milk fails these tests.

ANITA BOURNE
Press Officer
National Dairy Council
London W1

Algeria's agony

ROBERT FISK draws attention to the danger in Algeria of civilians armed and supported by the state ("Militias implicated in Algeria's reign of terror", 23 April). Recent atrocious massacres appear to have shaken the international community to the appalling situation in Algeria, upon which Amnesty International has been reporting for more than six years.

One of the few ways to break the cycle of such violence is to set up impartial and public enquiries and bring those responsible for killings, torture and other abuses to justice, whoever they may be. The Algerian government has not done this. The international community has had the opportunity to take action. But it has not done so.

The international community could have acted through the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR), whose annual meeting in Geneva ended on 24 April. But none of the 53 member states (including the UK) apparently felt able to take the lead and

table a resolution about Algeria - such as calling for the appointment of a UN special rapporteur, which could have led to action. Pleas to the Algerian government to cooperate, which it has refused to do, were quite inadequate.

What does it take to get something done? How many more deaths must there be? Those governments who only a few months ago said they could no longer simply stand back have done just that. Each member state bears a heavy responsibility for the lives which continue to be lost daily in Algeria.

ROGER GOLDSMITH
Country Coordinator for Algeria
Amnesty International UK
Colwyn Bay
Chwyd

'Real' nappies

I AM going to have a baby in October (all going well) and find myself in the midst of a baby boom among friends. I have been seriously considering not using disposable nappies. There seem to be some great alternatives about, which don't add to the landfill problems, and would cost less than two years' supply of disposables ("Britain warned of nappy mountain", 21 April).

When I somewhat hesitantly introduce the idea of using "real" nappies the response is universal scorn: "You must be joking... all that mess... all that washing..." One friend with a three-month-old said: "Stuff the environment, you just want it to be as easy and quick as possible." She went on to suggest that my baby would be worse off in real nappies - suffering nappy rash and leakages, and it would all be a horrendous mess.

It's going to be tough to resist that kind of peer pressure, but I think I'm going to try anyway.

VANYA BODY
Pangbourne,
Berkshire

Flag upside-down

IT'S NOT a myth that our national flag hung upside down is a recognised distress signal (letter 28 April). However, I've only ever seen it referred to in a marine context.

British-registered ships fly not a full-scale Union Flag, but a monochrome ensign with a reduced Union Flag in the top corner. There is no problem about noticing at once whether it is upside down. I agree, with radio and flares, it's not really the first line of resort nowadays, but you never know - it might come in handy some time.

KIRSTI WAGSTAFF
London SE16

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"I'm delighted my shows have gone down so well here. It probably means they are equally incomprehensible in any language." - Harry Enfield, comedian, after being given the top comedy award at the Montreux TV festival.

"Doing Blair was definitely difficult at first, but he is getting so messianic now it is a lot easier." - Rory Bremner, impressionist.

"A drunk man is more likely to find a woman attractive. So, if all else fails, get him drunk." - Dr Patrick McGhee, who coaches women on dating techniques.

"It is like being at an England vs All Blacks rugby match and you are the ball. Everyone wants to kill you." - Nigel Montford, a traffic warden, on the perils of his job.

"I might well use 'newt' in my slogan, but I certainly wouldn't use 'Newt'." - Ken Livingstone, distinctly Old Labour MP and breeder of amphibians, on his prospects of becoming London mayor.

"I'm just so excited - it's wonderful - and a very good quality wine here." - Wendy Richard, *EastEnders* actress, after meeting the Queen for the first time.

Protecting Venice

MICHAEL MCCARTHY'S report (21 April) highlighted the threat of catastrophic flooding facing Venice. For nearly two years I chaired the international panel of experts that supervised the preparation of the environmental impact statement for the proposed movable gates that would protect the lagoon against high tides and storm surges. We could not agree more with the conclusion that inaction endangers the city and the rest of the lagoon environment.

Unfortunately, I must strongly disagree with statements attributed to Professor Edmund Penning-Rowell. The gates are the only solution to long range flooding. They will protect the whole lagoon against flooding; they respect the commercial activity of the lagoon; they benefit the environment by protecting against flood; and they provide the opportunity to increase, through operation, circulation and water quality in the lagoon.

Professor Penning-Rowell asks, "What happens when the gates have to be closed every day, as they will?" It is very reasonable to assume that the relative sea level will be 20cm higher a hundred years from now. At that point the gates would have to be closed 70 times a year for 250 hours. That is accounting for false alarms. If we were to assume a rise of 50cm in the next 100 years, consistent with some of the predictions of the UN Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, the above situation would be reached in 50 years. Although frequent, the closures would be far from permanent. A life of 50 to 100 years for such an engineered solution is very reasonable.

The article suggests "small-scale local flood defence works" as an alternative to the gates. Such works, called "insulae" are already under construction. These raised walls on the perimeters of many small islands are being built to their maximum feasible elevation without being physically and aesthetically intrusive. They will significantly reduce the number of gate closures required under medium flood conditions, but cannot possibly protect the city and lagoon against the extreme and most damaging flood events.

If indeed the worst of the sea level rise scenarios do occur, the movable gates provide protection and time for the Italian and world community to react. The present design includes locks to permit emergency transit even while the gates are closed. If sea level rise were ever to force permanent closure - 100 or more years from now, the gates would not only have served their purpose but would provide the platform to implement the only solution possible: gates and locks. Ask the Dutch about their successful experience!

The gates are made of steel, not concrete, and are invisible except during operations. The cost quoted is too high by at least a factor of two. With the correct numbers the gates will not be a "waste of money".

RAFAEL L BRAS
Head, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Surgeons no fat cats

TIMOTHY RAGGATT QC believes that his taxable income of £190,000 is the same as a consultant surgeon ("Top lawyers get £500,000 a year from legal aid", 29 April). He is seriously wrong. The NHS salary of a consultant is a maximum of £54,000. The average private practice income of a consultant surgeon is £35,000. JEFFREY C McILWAIN FRCS
St Helens & Knowsley Hospitals
Merseyside

Jarvis Cocker's mum is a Tory — and he will be one, too



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
REVERTING
TO TYPE

I AM so glad that Jarvis Cocker's mum is a Tory. Not just for poor old William Hague's sake, but because it confirms something that I've always suspected about pop stars. The ones from working-class Labour backgrounds will go all materialistic and practical, leaving the vicars' sons and managing directors' daughters to proclaim their disgust with society, and their solidarity with anything remotely straggly.

Jarvis, it transpires, was also a Cub Scout, who passed some of his tenderest years in saluting the flag, singing hymns and collecting badges for various arcane skills involving string. Mum, a pillar of society clearly, is not only a Tory but will — next week — contest the parish elections in the small Nottinghamshire village of Carlton-in-Lindrick on behalf of the party of Thatcher, Major, Churchill and Widdcombe. She recalls how sweet the young Cocker was in his, er, woggles. Or were they toggles?

Whatever they were, it set me to wondering what other embarrassing secrets might be out there. I have no evidence for this, but I like to think that the mother of Chumbawumba's fearsome anarchist, Danbert Nobacon, is actually a fluffy-haired, cologne-sprayed old lady with pearls, inhabiting a cottage in Surrey, whose views are very far to the right of the man over whom this dutiful son tipped that barrel of ice water a month or so ago.

Ten to one, groups with names like The Putrescent Matriarchs or Stab The Bitch all trip home at weekends to have their laundry done by dotting mummies, and to catch up with the Gynkhana news. By Sunday they are back in Willesden, snorting lines and entertaining NME journalists with their radical rejection of smoothy T Blair and rotten ol' Cool Britannia.

And then what happens, eh? I'll tell you what happens — they revert. If you were once at college with Trotskyists, do you ever wonder what became of them?

All those magnificent phrases and that adamant certainty, surely they are — even now — laying up underground caches of weapons, or abroad, fighting in a steamy jungle somewhere for peasant freedom?

Of course not. They are now, most of them, middle managers at Tesco's, tax consultants or astrologers. You will come across them in the business section of Waterstones, where they will admit that they voted Conservative at the last election, but mostly as a protest at the synthetic nature of New Labour.

So what am I saying here? Merely that (yawn) we all become more right-wing as we get older? That rebellion loses its attraction when there's a mortgage to pay, or that burglars seem less like the armed wing of the dispossessed when they break into your house, and steal your collection of Santana CDs?

No. That is not my argument. When, earlier, I used the word "revert", that was exactly what I meant. Those who were born into suburban semis, went to church and were taught that manners maketh man, will — despite the violence of their adolescent rejection of this world — be tugged back to that world. The values — no, even the words — of their parents will be born again in them. And the same will happen for left-wingers too.

Apparently one of the best guides to adult voting behaviour is still to examine the political allegiance of the parents. The rationale for the decision may be entirely different, but the outcome will tend to be the same. Examine too the phrases that pass down the generations inside families. Does your five year old say things that your great granny told her daughter? Are some of your most private moments coloured by the words of long dead generations? Or is it just me?

If you think that this view is over-determined, then consider the experience of Radio 4. Some years ago the strategists at the former Home Service decided to take a look at the demographics of their channel. What they discovered alarmed them. Very few of the listeners, it transpired, were under 40.

The strategists took out their pocket calculators and did their sums. They worked out that aging and natural attrition would mean that within twenty years or so they would have no audience left. One day a skeletal Humphreys and a senile Naughtie would find themselves cackling dementedly from a cobwebbed studio to a tiny audience entirely composed of centenarians. An entirely new plan had to be devised to attract "younger listeners".

And then, as the redundancy notices for Melvyn Bragg and all the actors from *The Archers* were being composed, the youngest strategist (who had been quietly chewing her pencil at the back of the room for six months) suddenly shouted "stop!" Had anyone considered, she asked, the possibility that maybe the reason that the Radio 4 attracted so many over 40s, was because the over 40s liked it. In other words, that when people got to 40, along with golf, aromatherapy and discussing car routes, they just sort of slipped into Radio 4?

They went back and checked the research and saw that she was right. Listeners whose parents had themselves listened to Radio 4 — whose 4ness was established in childhood — would (after intervening periods of Radio 1 and various commercial stations) revert. Like Mum they too would listen to *The Archers*. Oh Jarvis, what a wonderful past stretches before you!

Beware politicians on the Internet, as they find forms of manipulation



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
ELECTRONIC
DEMAGOGUES

PLEASE don't do it again, boys. There are several things that political leaders should not try out in public, like dancing, riding a pony-furthing, or standing too close to Gyles Brandreth. These activities, unless carried out expertly and with panache, are guaranteed to generate public scorn and ridicule.

This week, the efforts of Messrs Hague and Blair to top one another in the realm of cyberspace democracy were worthy but should not be repeated unless and until everyone has had some lessons. Mr Blair's unfamiliarity with a keyboard was manifest; his advisers wisely told him to let Sir David Frost and his minions do the typing. Mr Hague knows his way around a computer, probably from the McKinsey days; he tried to top the Prime Minister by typing his answers in real time. His problem is that though he can cope with real time he still has problems with real people who ask awkward questions about the euro.

This is the age of enhanced democracy. We want our public figures constantly to be interrogated and tested in public. A few politicians are responding to this. The Labour MP Barbara Follett, has established a system of consulting groups in her constituency on most big items of government policy, face-to-face. She brings together all the people who have written to her on a particular subject, plus all the local interest groups, and they thrash out the issues, agree a line if they can and send it in writing to the relevant minister. It sounds painful, but is probably enlightening. But not all MPs have Ms Follett's energy and resources; many would shudder at the idea of regular contact with their constituency busybodies.

That is why the Blair-Hague efforts this week to do democracy at a distance is so interesting. As an effort to demonstrate that computers can work in the service of democracy neither sum quite came off; but they did neatly point to one possible future for democracy. The pushbutton democracy, where we make decisions instantly and collectively may be just around the



Off the box: David Frost interviewing the Prime Minister on the Internet

Photograph: PA

corner. As soon as Mr Gates and Mr Murdoch can get us all online through their shiny new PCs and satellite screens, we too can tell the prime minister what to do, every day, all day, just like them.

In fact, as you troll off to put your tick next to the name of a local council candidate you do not know, or if you are in London, to vote "yes" to democracy for the capital, you might be wondering why in these days of home PCs, satellites, internets and digital doodads you cannot already cast your ballot from your comfortable armchair. After all, if you can buy fake pearl earrings without moving from

and settle pointless arguments quickly and decisively?

And there are other attractions. At present, because we cannot have referendums every day, we must elect governments, local and national, of which we only broadly approve; we may dislike many of their specific policies, but we have no choice about which ones we can reject once we have put the tick by the name. Pushbutton democracy would allow us to say which aspects of a party's platform we dislike; the elected representative would come into office knowing what bits of the manifesto to leave at the front door. Above all, in the post-ide-

Or you could register via the local library, or if that's been closed down, through Tesco's, where there are soon bound to be Internet-linked computer terminals right next to the phone booths. If you don't know how, you'll be trained, or assisted by one of the Government's welfare-to-work trainees. It is all possible; and as much as it pains me to say it, it is all ghastly.

One problem with pushbutton democracy is that it is too easy. What happens if we, like most human beings change our minds? In fact, the capacity to vote again might well encourage us to do so. Ten years ago, be-

Another worrying aspect of the push-button democracy is that it removes the time to reflect. If you have e-mail, you will by now be used to the morning routine of opening your online mailbox to discover a dozen or more messages — all of which have to be answered immediately. It certainly makes us talk — but what are we saying? Are we sending considered responses — or are we simply getting the e-mails off our list of things to do? Today we all expect the e-mail to come winging its way back within hours, if not minutes. The same would be true of a system where the government could consult the citizen every hour of the day; you could be sure that the politicians would make the process one that prevented informed choice rather than enhanced it.

The greatest problem with the pushbutton democracy is that its very speed and convenience would make our political currency emotional impact rather than rational argument. Quick decisions based on minimum knowledge give advantages to demagogues, populists and opportunists. Maybe that's what we deserve.

I could just about live, I guess with the modern equivalent of Pericles; but what happens if the machines gave sway to a true master of the gut instinct, someone who was a perfect conduit for mass emotion rather than a filter of the people's will? Can you imagine Cyber Prime Minister Jerry Springer? Pull the plugs now, I say.

The pushbutton democracy, where we make decisions instantly and collectively, may be just around the corner

your front room, why can't you pick a politician of slightly less value the same way? The answer is that although you cannot yet, soon you will be able to do so. In the US, experiments are being conducted to see whether there are better ways of dealing with local issues than leaving them to elected representatives. Local plebiscites on parking systems, school reform, even the design of municipal stationery are being conducted in small towns. The citizens of these Periclean enclaves of direct democracy, it seems respond to them.

As a semi-anorak myself, I could hardly argue with the prospect of taking democracy out of the hands of the contemptible self-serving politicians and putting it into the hands of the people. Why not harness the wisdom of the people, engage their enthusiasm,

ology age, the pushbutton democracy could be the instrument that frees us from the tyranny of the party. If we the people, possess the means to direct policy on a weekly, even daily basis, surely all that we need are effective and honest managers? Their job should be to give us the stakeholders as much information as we need to make our decisions, and then to carry out those decisions quickly and effectively.

This is a New Britain vision of democracy. It whirrs, it hums and it's graphics are bright and cheerful. For the prophets of the Information Age, it is Nirvana. There are, of course, bound to be transitional problems. Maybe not everyone has the gear; but the answer to that is simple — IBM, Microsoft and BT join with the government to wire up every household in the UK.

ing a technophile, I persuaded London Weekend TV to purchase a new digital editing system that was twice as fast as the systems then in use. The idea was that we would cut editing time in half and save wads of money which could then be used to pay more journalists to deliver more and better stories. Some hope; what it actually did was enable directors and editors to tinker with their films twice as much. We got better-looking films, but we saved little money. The point is that given more choices, most of us will use the opportunity to dither.

The downside of the pill that's billed as an up



JEREMY
LAURANCE
ON TOP OF A
NEW PROBLEM

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been talked about Viagra, the cure for male impotence launched in the US this week. Billed variously as the answer to men's prayers, the answer to women's prayers (a hard man is good to find, as Mae West observed) and the fastest selling drug in history, it is a victim of self-generated hype, born aloft on the hopes and fears of millions of people obsessed by the notion that they may be missing out in our sex-crazed world. Viagra certainly appears to have a vroom, vroom effect, boosting manly vigour and self-image. It has even achieved the ultimate American accolade —

top billing on the cover of *Time* magazine. It is clearly the answer to Pfizer's prayers, the pharmaceutical company fortunate to have stumbled across it. Early studies in students in 1991 of its potential as a heart drug revealed it had a pleasing side effect. The share price has since responded like the target organ.

But the prospects for this diamond-shaped magic bullet are not all good. In the excitement that has surrounded its launch, the downside of a world in which every man, from 18 to 80, can feel like an Arnold Schwarzenegger has been missed. Below are ten reasons why, when the drug authorities in Britain consider giving Viagra a licence, as they are expected to do in the autumn, they should pause.

1. The market for Ferrari Testarossas will be destroyed at a stroke. Which man will bother to trumpet up £350,000 when for £5.50 he can obtain the same boost to his image?

2. Marriage guidance counsellors will be in disarray. Why go through all that tearful inquiry and tricky conciliation when a glass of water and a quick swallow can guarantee repeated bliss?

3. Viagra is said to aid performance by blocking an enzyme that causes erections to

subside, thus strengthening and prolonging them. Expect, therefore, a new urban scare: predatory women spiking men's drinks. It could give a new meaning to the term "lager'd up".

4. Improved performance will lead to more sex and more demand for sex. Is this what the world needs? This is a delicate matter and no one wishes to be branded a killjoy. But consider we have an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, abortions are at record levels and the world faces a population explosion. Bromide, maybe; Viagra, no.

5. A black market for the pill is already in full swing in the United States. Internet sites and telephone lines have been established for those desperate for a fix. A stronger and better erection has an appeal far beyond the one-in-twenty men estimated to be impotent. Barbers may once again begin inquiring awkwardly whether sir would be needing something for the weekend.

6. Evidence is emerging of abuse. Some students are reported to have increased the dose from the recommended one tablet taken an hour before sex to two or three. One researcher suggested people without sexual dysfunction would be using it five or six times a

night. "They will take it too frequently and at too high a dose and get into big trouble," he said, leaving it annoyingly unclear what "big trouble" meant.

7. The pill has side effects. The first man in Britain to take it, the director of a Harley Street clinic that is offering the drug on a private basis to selected patients, described how it made his head swell up in-



stead of the other part of his anatomy. Other men have reported headaches, indigestion and a blue tint to their vision. But there is a still more serious problem — its effect on the already swollen male ego. A pill that leads to exaggerated displays of male potency will not make the world a better place.

8. Impotence increases with

age. While Viagra may bring increased enjoyment to the younger generation, its target market is older men. Once men of 80 perform as if they were 18 again, what of the impact on relations between the sexes? And on the divorce rate? More sex at greater ages will have a destabilising effect on the social fabric.

9. An estimated six-out-of-ten men with impotence do not seek treatment because they do not believe there is anything that can be done. As news about the wonder drug spreads, family doctors will find their surgeries bulging with men elbowing out the ante-natal classes and the vaccination clinics.

10. This is a pill that improves the mechanics of sex. It will rightly be viewed with suspicion by women who think men's chief failing is that they regard sex as a mechanical process. Men who have difficulty with sex are aiming for the wrong thing if they treat it as a mechanical failure.

Ten reasons add up to a poor prospect for a drug on which such hopes are built. And despite being misleadingly labelled the "good love pill", Viagra is not an aphrodisiac. It boosts the male erection — but only when the spirit is willing. In this respect it differs from existing drugs, injected or insert-

ed into the end of the penis, which automatically trigger erections and can cause embarrassment on the bus home from the sexologist's clinic.

Pfizer's pill, the chemical name of which is sildenafil, is said to improve performance without stimulating desire. The distinction will, however, be lost on most people. It may save the rhino — although as a non-aphrodisiac it should offer no competition to powdered horn — but it will not save the planet. There is, however, one situation in which it may prove valuable — beyond the planet.

As NASA gears up in the US for a new era of space exploration, there is concern among space technologists about our capacity to reproduce among the stars. Apparently, weightlessness could play havoc with the mechanics of sex.

Public interest in taking a trip into space is growing and the possibility of stratospheric sex is a part of the attraction. There is a Space Tourism Society in Los Angeles, another in Virginia and packages said to be on offer include a \$12,000 trip to the edge of space in a Russian MiG. For future space explorers, Viagra may be a necessary part of the kit — guaranteeing that they do not forget how the earth moves as they tour the solar system.

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Dominique Aury

ONE of the masterpieces of erotic sadomasochistic fiction is Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O*. It was published in 1954 by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, a specialist in high-class literary pornography, and, in a ludicrously anonymous English translation, by the notorious Maurice Girodias in 1970. The novel created a tremendous sensation in those prudishly frivolous Fifties, and earned world-wide celebrity in 1975 as a movie by Just Jackin.

The popularity of the book and film was helped by the mystery surrounding the author, though her real name was an open secret in French literary circles. But it was not until 1984 that the true authorship of this sulphurous work of genius was revealed to a wider public, in a *New Yorker* essay extracted from a book by John de St. Jorre about Girodias and his infamous Olympia Press, entitled *The Good Ship Venus: the erot-*

ic voyage of the Olympia Press. St Jorre had interviewed Réage during his researches, and "unmasked" her as Dominique Aury, an influential journalist and editor who had long worked for French magazines and publishers. She had been on Gallimard's reading committee and general secretary of the *Revue Française* since 1953, as well as jury member for various important literary prizes including the Fémina since 1963.

"Dominique Aury" was itself a pseudonym, derived from the maiden name of her mother, Louise Auricoste. Her father was Auguste Desclaux, a professor, and his daughter was baptised Anne Desclaux. She graduated from the Sorbonne with a degree in English, and started work at the Paris-based Teachers' College of Columbia University, between 1933 and 1939. After the defeat of France she found work as a translator

and journalist on *Lettres Françaises*, from 1942 to 1946, and after the Liberation began her long career as publisher's reader and editor.

It was while she was working for Gallimard that her love affair with one of its leading writers and editors, Jean Paulhan, began. He married, and in order to preserve her liaison with him Aury took up a challenge he, with typical French male macho condescension, had thrown at her: "No women could ever write a truly erotic novel."

Knowing his passion for the writings of de Sade, she plunged into a study of the Divine Marquis in order to find inspiration for a series of love letters in novel form. "I wasn't very pretty, I was no longer young" - she was in her late forties - "so my pen was the only weapon I had left with which to lure him back." Three months later, she sent Paulhan her typescript, which he

called in his preface "the most ardent love letter that any man has ever received".

At the end of the long, hot summer, he returned to her in Paris, where he gave the text to his close friend the publisher Pauvert, who was at once enthusiastic. He already knew Aury as a critic and translator of the highest quality, and found her novel of the same distinguished literary style, even when it was describing the most depraved and self-abusing sexual acts ever performed by a woman enslaved to a pitiless and insatiable master in the arts of Eros. Indeed, the very beauty of the prose gave those deranged and dangerous acts of lascivious passion an added piquancy, sadly lacking in the abysmal English version.

Aury had not intended the book to become a cheap shocker, for she conceived it as a true work of art. But she did not want to distress her ageing par-

ents with its publication, so she insisted on a pseudonym. She chose "Pauline" in homage to two of her great idols, Pauline Borghese and the 19th-century feminist-socialist Pauline Roland, who in 1848 was a militant advocate of the emancipation of women. As for "Réage", she claimed she had picked it up from a catalogue. But the spiteful Paris literary gossips had long since claimed that the pseudonym was an anagram (except for one letter, "R") of "Eugénie Paulhan". As early as 1974, Aury had admitted, in an interview for *Elle*, that her identity had been revealed by a scandal rag. In 1990, even the stately columns of *Le Monde* announced that "Pauline Réage" was Dominique Aury.

Her book became a permanent best-seller, translated into many languages. I have found versions of it in *manga* (comic strips) in Japanese "pink

porno" magazines, and in explicit *roman-photo* form. It has appeared in many, exquisitely produced private editions, with illustrations in the vein of Aubrey Beardsley and Pierre Klossowski. Its beautiful prose, however, is what has made it a true classic.

Dominique Aury wrote good translations of British and American novels, for which she was awarded the Prix Denyse-Clairet. Her essays *Lecture pour tous* won the Grand Prix de la Critique in 1958. She was a white-haired sprightly septuagenarian when she started compiling her last work, a fine *Anthologie de la poésie religieuse française*, published in 1989.

James Kirkup

Anne Desclaux (Dominique Aury), writer and translator: born Rochefort-sur-Mer, France 23 September 1907; married Raymond d'Angla (one son; marriage dissolved); died 30 April 1998.



Aury: piquant eroticism

Photograph: Rex Features



Hayes with Grace Hayes, his mother, left, and Mary Healy in *Zis Boom Bah*, 1941. He married Healy the same year
Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Peter Lind Hayes

"THE COW" gone dry and the hens won't lay. / The fish quit bitin' last Saturday, / Troubles pile up day by day, / And now I'm gettin' dandruff! Those lugubrious words are from "Life Gets Thee Jus, Don't It?", the 1948 hit recorded by Peter Lind Hayes, whose long career encompassed virtually all the media.

He was only two when his father, Joseph Conrad Lind Sr, a railroad man and amateur singer, died. Peter attended parochial school in Cairo, Illinois, but, from the age of nine, performed every summer with his mother, Grace Hayes, a vaudeville star. At 16, he wrote a new act for his mother and himself; they appeared in it at New York's legendary vaudeville theatre the Palace.

In 1939, while Peter was working as a film stand-in, his mother built the Grace Hayes Lodge, a night-club in the San Fernando Valley. An instant success, the club attracted a large film-business clientele,

with mother and son starring in the floor-shows. Peter soon graduated from stand-in to film actor; in 1939 he appeared in *These Glamour Girls*, which starred (naturally) Lana Turner, and in *Million Dollar Legs*, which (equally naturally) starred Betty Grable.

Under contract to Paramount, he had just acted with Jackie Cooper in *Seventeen* (1940) when he met Mary Healy, who was under contract to 20th Century-Fox; they married the following year. Also in 1941, the newly weds appeared in *Zis Boom Bah*, a low-budget musical in which Grace Hayes also played, as a vaudeville star who buys her college student son (Peter) a café, which he turns into a successful night-club.

As Victor Mature's army buddy in *Seven Days' Leave* (1942), Hayes sang, danced and did impersonations of Ronald Colman, Lionel Barrymore and Charles Laughton. The day after completing the

film, he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps, and was assigned to the corps's Radio Production Unit, which wrote and presented daily broadcasts. Private Frank Loesser, writer, was also in the unit, and he and Hayes collaborated on "Why Do They Call a Private a Private?", a song introduced on one of their shows by Ethel Merman. Hayes later joined the all-serviceman cast of Moss Hart's Air Force play *Winged Victory* (1943). The following year he appeared in the film version as well.

Hayes left the service in 1945 with a Bronze Star for having entertained more than a million troops in the South Pacific. His first post-war film was Universal's *The Senator Was Indiscreet* (1947), the only film directed by the celebrated playwright George S. Kaufman. Although Hayes had made at least a dozen previous screen appearances, his name on the opening credits was, curiously, preceded by "And Introduce-

ing". He played a political publicist, trying to sell the voters the pea-brained Senator Melvin Ashton (William Powell) as their next President. The film fired some witty barbs at American politics (Ashton came out flatly against assassination), but had the bad luck to emerge the same year as the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Universal promoted the satirical Senator very gingerly.

Hayes next played a lovable hansom cab driver in *Heaven on Earth* (1948), a 12-performance Broadway musical that the *New York Star* called "the biggest sleeping pill in town". His other stage work included Norma Krassa's farce *Who Was That Lady I Saw You With?* (1958) and Brian Friel's *Lovers* (1968).

After establishing themselves as a top night-club team, Hayes and Mary Healy appeared together in such television series as *The Chevrolet Show* (1949), *The Stark Club* (1950), *Star of the Family* (1951-

52) and the sitcom *Peter Loves Mary* (1960-61). For the big screen, they co-starred in *The Five Thousand Fingers of Dr T* (1953), the Dr Seuss musical about a young boy (Tommy Rettig) who rescues his hypnotized mother (Mary Healy) from his wicked piano teacher (Hans Conreid), with the help of Mr Zabladowski, a friendly plumber (Hayes). A disaster on its first release, this surrealistic classic was successfully revived 20 years later and now enjoys cult status.

In 1952, while appearing with Mary Healy at the London Palladium, Hayes was asked the secret of a successful marriage. He replied, "All you have to do is get your wife in the act - and keep her there."

Dick Vosburgh

Joseph Conrad Lind (Peter Lind Hayes), actor, composer and writer: born San Francisco 25 June 1915; married 1940 Mary Healy (one son, one daughter); died Las Vegas 22 April 1998.

D. W. J. Osmond

D. W. J. OSMOND was an innovative industrial chemist working with ICI for over 30 years.

He was born in 1925, the only son of a traindriver. He took a wartime science degree at Reading University, graduating in 1945; and began post-graduate studies there, funded by ICI, with Professor E.A. Guggenheim. Osmond was a dedicated researcher, always concerned to see a practical application of his work - a difference with Guggenheim which led him to discontinue his post-graduate project at Reading before he had obtained his doctorate.

The same independence of mind led him twice to decline promotion within ICI which would have taken him further from personal "hands-on" experimentation and observation.

His example, and that of others like him, led ICI to introduce in the Sixties a "scientific ladder" to recognise and reward scientific contribution comparably with that of senior management. Osmond was among the initial appointments and advanced to its highest level, retiring in 1979 as Senior Research Associate.

His pioneering work at ICI on non-aqueous polymer dispersions arose from lateral thinking on how to produce more durable car paints with less air-polluting solvent. Little did he realise at its outset the breadth of industrial applications to which it would lead or its future academic significance.

It is a fascinating scientific detective story how, contrary to then accepted theory, his early experiments led adventitiously

to stable dispersions of the polymer poly-methyl methacrylate in petroleum fractions. Its elucidation then led to the synthesis of discrete specific stabilisers for individual polymers in different carrying liquids. The hazy understanding of the mechanism described as "steric stabilisation" (the means by which the polymer is held stably in the liquid) subsequently led him into the previously unexplored theoretical field of its energetics (thermodynamics).

The early practical applications, for example in paint finishes for cars, led to ICI Paints' receiving in 1969 the rarer of the Queen's Awards for Industry, that for technical innovation. It later led to better alternatives to ceramics for sanitary ware and additives for reducing the flammability of aircraft fuels.

Exploration of the theoretical questions involved led, at Osmond's instigation, to a close collaboration with the Colloid School of Chemistry at Bristol University established by Professor D.H. Everett. In consequence, what could have remained a crude polymerisation technique was developed to provide the well-characterised colloidal systems crucial for the elucidation of the concept of "steric stabilisation". The appreciation of its importance has altered the course of research on colloidal systems in both industry and academia.

In 1974, Osmond and R.H. Ottewill, of Bristol University, were simultaneously awarded the Industrial Medal of the Chemical Society for their work in this field. A quarter of a century's work by Osmond and

industrial and academic colleagues is published in numerous patents, scientific papers and the 1975 book *Dispersion Polymerisation in Organic Media*.

All who encountered "Ozzie" professionally in industrial and academic science or socially and in his personal interests, recognised an extraordinary wide-ranging, powerfully analytical and creative mind of insatiable curiosity. It was combined with a similarly outstanding generosity of spirit. When he had applied himself to almost any matter, there was little further for others to add. His co-workers, meanwhile, visibly grew under his encouragement.

The same fertile mind was applied to many of his fields of personal interest, most sig-

nificantly to music and its performance and reproduction. He addressed himself to reducing the interaction of pitch and volume in recorders, and to improving the performance of electric harpsichords, and of high-fidelity "quad" speakers. In the mid-Seventies, he became a consultant to the Museum of Musical Instruments in Brussels on the better preservation of the many historical instruments in its outstanding collection.

It is a tribute to Osmond's intellectual acumen and willpower that he achieved so much while battling against the earlier stages of the distressing and debilitating Parkinson's disease. It cut short his scientific work, but he and his devoted wife, Peggy, maintained a long and brave struggle against it. Characteristically he assisted



Osmond: fertile mind

his medical advisers in diagnosis and treatment of his gradually deteriorating physical condition.

John Long and Fred Waite

Desmond Wilfred John Osmond, industrial chemist: born Salisbury, Wiltshire 27 June 1925; married 1946 Peggy Mulligan; died Exeter, Devon 13 April 1998.

Peter Bean, diplomat, died 30 April, aged 48. Deputy Head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office News Department.

Milburn Henke, soldier and restaurateur, died Hutchinson, Minnesota, aged 79. The first GI to set foot on the British Isles during the Second World War, on 26 January 1942 in Belfast. Ramadan el-Prince (Ramadan Mohammed Shaker), pop singer, died near Assuet, Egypt 26 April, aged 42. Songs include "We Shoulder the Burden Without Our Mothers".

George Fraser, journalist, died Aberdeen 24 April, aged 102. Britain's oldest working journalist; contributed a column to the *Press and Journal* until earlier this year.

Hassan Tahboub, died Amman, Jordan 27 April, aged 75. Palestinian minister of religious affairs.

Ken Gwilym, died aged 83. President of the Welsh Rugby Union 1984-85.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

WARD: On 7 April 1998, in Ipswich, Suffolk, to Alison (nee Glaister) and David, a daughter, Helena Molly Elizabeth. A sister for Richard, Simon and Andrew.

Announcements for GASTON BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gaston Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2002 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2011) or faxed to 0171-293 2000, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gaston announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

The Independent's main switchboard number is 0171-293 2000. The OBITUARIES e-mail address is obituaries@independent.co.uk

Changing of the Guard TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. The Queen's Guard mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, and provided by the Scots Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. The Household Cavalry mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, and provided by the Scots Guards.

Birthdays

TODAY: Dr Robert Anderson, Director, British Museum, 54; Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barradough, 50; Mr Theodore Bikel, actor, 74; Professor Neil Buxton, Vice-Chancellor, University of Hertfordshire, 58; The Right Rev Bruce Cameron, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, 57; Sir Hugh Cortazzi, former diplomat, 74; Dr Ian Evans, Head Master, Bedford School, 50; Mr Alastair Forbes, journalist and writer, 80; Mr Jon Foulds, chairman, Halifax Building Society, 66; Mr Peter Foster, architect, 79; Sir Campbell Fraser, former chairman, Scottish Television, 75; Sir James Hamilton, former civil servant, 75; Dr Patrick Hillery, former president of the Irish Republic, 75; Professor Sir Robert Honeycombe, metallurgist, 77; Mr Engelbert Humperdinck, rock singer, 62; Mr Clive Jenkins, trade union leader, 72; Mr Brian Lara, cricketer, 29; Mr Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, President of Pakistan, 58; Dr Malcolm Lipkin, composer, 66; Mr Richard Livesey MP, 63; Mr David Lock MP, 38; Miss Peggy Mount, actress, 82; Mr John Neville, actor, 73; Mrs Dawn Primarolo MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 44; Lord Simon QC, barrister, 68; Sir Ronald Sinclair, former judge, 95; Dame Nancy Sange, former Director, WRAR, 92; Mr David Suchet, actor, 52; Mr Alan Titchmarsh, broadcaster, 49; Mr Jimmy White, snooker player, 36; Lord Wood, Master of the Rolls, 65. TOMORROW: Mr James Brown, singer, composer and musician, 65; Miss Pat Chapman, former Editor, *News of the World*, 50; Miss Betty Comden, playwright and screenwriter, 79; Mrs Kathy Cook, athlete, 38; Mr Henry Cooper, boxer, 64; Mr Gerald Davies MP, 38; Sir Graham Day, former chairman, Cadbury Schweppes and PowerGen, 65;

Mr Ben Elton, comedian and author, 39; Sir Russell Fairservice, former MP, 74; Sir William Glock, music lecturer and critic, 90; Sir William Grey, former Lord Provost of Glasgow, 70; Lt-Gen Sir Alexander Harley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, 57; Dr David Harrison, Master, Selwyn College, Cambridge, 68; Professor Ruth Lester, social economist, 49; Col Sir Michael McCorkell, Lord-Lieutenant of County Londonderry, 73; Miss Sheila McKechie, Director, Consumers' Association, 50; Sir Christopher MacRae, former High Commissioner to Pakistan, 61; Ms Randle Marmarong, poet and author, 56; Mr Peter Oosterhuis, golfer, 49; Baroness Seccombe, Vice-Chairman, Conservative Party, 68; Mr Pete Seeger, folk singer, 79; Dr Norbert Singer, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Greenwich, 67; Mr Norman Thelwell, illustrator and cartoonist, 75; Miss Sandi Toksvig, comedienne, 40; Mr Robert Walter MP, 50; Mr Allan Wells, athlete, 46.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Birth: Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby, singer, 1904. Deaths: Leonardo da Vinci, painter, sculptor and scientist, 1519. On this day the Authorised Version of the Bible was published, 1611. Today is the Feast Day of St Athanasius, Saints Eusepius or Hesperus and Zoe. St Melode, St Urban of Forres, St Waldebert and St Wilfrida. TOMORROW: Birth: Mrs Golda Meir, Israeli prime minister, 1898. Deaths: Thomas Hood, poet, 1845. On this day, New Zealand was proclaimed a British colony, 1841. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of Saints Alexander, Eusebius and Theodulus, St James the Less, St Juvenal of Narni, St Philip the Apostle, St Philip of Zell and Saints Timothy and Naxos.

FAITH & REASON

Original sin and the hounding of Mary Bell

The baying against child killers and paedophiles reveals our urge to locate sin always outside ourselves. But even *Sun* journalists need to look elsewhere, argues Andrew Brown

THE DIFFICULT thing about original sin, when you come to think of it, is deciding where it stops and starts. It is not hard to discover that cruelty and misery are fundamental features of the way the world is, and of how we are. If the 20th century had one lesson, it was that this cruelty and misery is ineradicable. We can perhaps make terms with it but we cannot hope to eradicate it; and all the various Utopian attempts to do so look ghastly in the muddy light of Poi Poi's funeral pyre.

However, the Utopian impulse is not long to be suppressed. Now that left-wing systems are out of fashion, there is a countervailing Utopianism which suggests that, if only we could take account of individual wickedness, then we

could design a system in which it would in any case not be amplified. Perhaps original sin is something that only people do, not societies. This is the sort of belief, it seems to me, that has led to the hounding of Mary Bell.

It leads to a chain of reasoning something like this: she as an individual did something evil. This was something for which she alone was ultimately responsible - in so far as a child can be responsible for anything. No doubt she had a terrible childhood, maltreated by a ghastly mother and even some of her prostitute mother's customers. But other children have had childhoods just as bad and not committed these dreadful crimes. So (the *Sun* might argue) any attempt to exculpate her by drawing attention to this is in themselves wicked.

Yet original sin must mean something more than this. It is not a doctrine that says that wicked people are responsible for their own wickedness: the startling power and originality of the doctrine is that it says that everyone has the capacity for real evil. Nicholas Lash, the Cambridge theologian, says: "What is needed is the reasonable patient quiet recognition of just what messed-up monsters all of us are."

The purely individual view of sin swiftly slides almost at once into cruelties almost as great as Utopianism can produce. Once evil has been - rightly - located in other people's conduct, we tend to think it is safely located there too, and there is no real need to examine our own. This confidence leads to the pursuit of elderly paedophiles around the West Country by baying mobs. It has also led to what looks very like the destruction of Mary Bell's life, and that of her daughter, by the press and its readers.

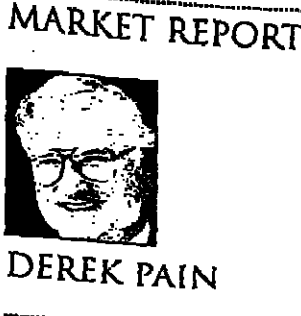
There is an important distinction between what she did and what they - we - have done. Though journalism may be morally equivocal, it is not murder. Individual journalists hardly ever kill anyone, or even, as individuals, murder a reputation. What happens instead is that the pack takes over. In this instance it was the *Sun* which identified Mary Bell - at least to anyone who knows her, if not to the vast majority of its readers. But I'm sure some of its rivals would have done the same if they had had the chance. This does not mean that there is anything particularly repulsive or sinful about journalists, though I believe that what the *Sun* did was both repulsive and, if the term has any meaning,

sinful. It was just unexceptional, too, part of what the theologian Rowan Williams calls "the way that acts and persons grind together to destroy and erode everything".

What gives it a peculiar horror is the disproportion of the consequence to the wrongness. This disproportion is the social dimension of original sin. It is part of the ineradicable wrongness of the world which the doctrine also means; what the Pope called "structures of sin". What is true and right about the Gita-Sereny approach to evil is that even the most evil among us need to have those tendencies brought out by the course of our lives; and most of those who are evil have had childhoods so ghastly that it is possible daintily to imagine how we might crack under such strain.

The trouble is that the notion of original sin sounds absurd because the Genesis story in which it first appears is unhistorical. There was no Adam. There was no Eve. There never was a garden. The wrongness in the world was not all brought here by human beings. But with all that said, there is still sin to explain; and at least the old doctrine was right to say that it will persist for as long as the world does.

Four-day winning streak puts Footsie back above 6,000



DEREK PAIN

EQUITIES achieved a four-day winning streak with Footsie recapturing the 6,000 high ground.

This week's advance has reduced fears that the Stock Market had run out of steam and was set for a dull, subdued period of indecisiveness.

It was the first time for two weeks that Footsie topped 6,000 points. It started this week with a 141.5 fall as sudden worries of higher US interest rates took their toll.

But since black Monday, shares have moved ahead and yesterday's progress, an 82 gain to 6,010.3, means the index achieved a near 150 net gain over the five trading days.

An in-form New York, some encouraging economic indicators and that old faithful, takeover excitement, provided the stimulus. Supporting shares were in form with the mid and small cap indices making headway.

Turnover, however, was

low, as befitted a Friday ahead of a Bank Holiday.

EMI, which prompted the bid excitement with its revelation of a bid approach, gave up a little of its takeover-inspired gain, ending 7.5p off at 600p. Allied Domecq, the drinks group, which could be drawn into corporate action if Seagram, the Canadian group, does, as most suspect, emerge as EMI's suitor, firmed 14p to 629p.

Picking the next bid target occupied much of the day's trading. Reckitt & Colman, the household goods group for long suspected of being in Unilever's sights, jumped 52p to 1.257p; Ladbroke, seen as an American target, countered 11.25p to 340p and Safeway, known to have attracted Asda, put on 11p to 367.5p.

Unilever, helped by results, did its acquisition ability no harm at all with a 31p gain to 688p; Asda, with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson positive, rose 4.5p to 204.75p.

Cable & Wireless was another caught up in the speculation. The shares improved 25p to 710p. Orange, the mobile phone group, also had a speculative ring, up 18p to 447.25p.

Southern Electric, the only one of the electricity dozen privatised eight years ago to retain its independence, held at 550p as SG Securities drew attention to its "rarity value".

Insurers remained in demand. General Accident added 74p to 1,480p with its intended partner, Commercial Union, improving 51p to 1,170p. The insurance merger is still, some believe, threatened by European interest. The shares of the two had a weak time before rallying this week. There is speculation the share retreat could have encouraged an overseas group to consider intervening.

Alliance & Leicester enjoyed a late run, jumping 54p to 890p as some decided it could be the first quoted

former building society to feel the heat of a takeover strike. Talk of share buybacks, even a special dividend, was also in the air.

Whitbread, ahead of figures next week, gained 37p to 1,070p. Merrill Lynch expects £358.2m, a £55.4m gain.

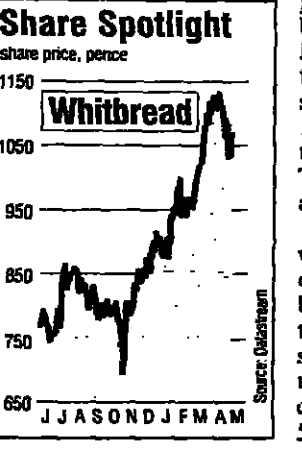
Cadbury Schweppes hardened 6p to 878p. Its first-quarter US soft drink sales came

in better than some predicted. Volume was up 1.5 per cent, despite a late Easter, with the Dr Pepper brand leading the way.

Abbey National shaded 8p to 1,115p as SBC Warburg trimmed its profits estimates and lowered its target price to 1,220p. Halifax, with Schroders offering a 90p target, firmed to 800p.

Carpenter was unimpressed by more share buying by chairman Lord Harris of Pockham, the TSB Party benefactor. He acquired 290,000 shares at 330p and now has 16.16 per cent. The deal left the shares off 6p at 338p. They were 651p two years ago.

Hambro Insurance Services may not be around long enough to be split from Hambros, the merchant bank falling to a South African strike. The shares rose 16p to 124.5p after the company said it had received approaches. It is owned 52 per cent by Hambros.



TAKING STOCK

STOCKBROKER Durlacher, planning a move into market-making, jumped 57.5p to 275p, a peak, as the market cottoned on to its involvement with Demos Internet, Britain's largest independent internet service provider. Scottish Power is paying £66m in cash for the internet business. Durlacher's Demos stake is not thought to be large, around 1 per cent.

ASPEN, the marketing and specialist printing group, firmed 2.5p to 112.5p. There was talk of takeover action. A US group, Quonastus, is known to be interested and has around 3 per cent of the capital. It came apparent in March that Quonastus was considering an offer. The Americans specialise in the information industry.

CHARLTON, the First Division club challenging for a place in the Premiership, raised £574,000, placing shares at 50p. Directors were among those taking up the shares, unchanged at 51.5p.

MARKET REPORT

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

Alcoholic Beverages							
48 480	Alfred Dunhill	350.00	-1.5	13	126		
58 250	Budweiser	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
68 250	Guinness	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
78 250	Heineken	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
88 250	Stout	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

Banking

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

18 300	Barclays	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
28 300	HSBC	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
38 300	London & Lancashire	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
48 300	Midland	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
58 300	Paragon	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

Building & Construction

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

68 300	Anglo	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
78 300	Bechtel	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
88 300	Carillion	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
98 300	Chambers	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
108 300	Costain	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

Chemicals

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

118 300	Alkermes	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
128 300	Amgen	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
138 300	Baxter	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
148 300	Boehringer	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
158 300	Glaxo	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

Electronics

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

168 300	Acorn	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
178 300	Amstrad	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
188 300	Ascom	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
198 300	Bull	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
208 300	Compaq	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

Engineering

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

218 300	Alstom	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
228 300	BAE	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
238 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
248 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
258 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

268 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
278 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
288 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
298 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
308 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

318 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
328 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
338 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
348 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
358 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

368 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
378 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
388 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
398 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
408 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

418 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
428 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
438 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
448 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
458 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

468 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
478 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
488 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
498 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
508 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

518 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
528 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
538 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
548 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
558 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

568 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
578 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
588 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
598 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
608 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

618 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
628 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
638 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
648 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
658 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

668 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
678 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
688 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
698 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
708 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

718 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
728 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
738 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
748 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
758 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

768 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
778 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
788 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
798 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
808 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

818 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
828 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
838 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
848 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
858 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

868 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
878 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
888 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
898 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
908 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

918 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
928 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
938 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
948 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
958 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

968 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
978 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
988 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
998 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1008 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

1018 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1028 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1038 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1048 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1058 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

1068 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1078 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1088 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1098 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1108 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

1118 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1128 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1138 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		
1148 300	BAE Systems	100.00	-1.5	13	126		

£33m for Internet pioneer as ScottishPower buys Demon

By Michael Harrison

A FORMER accountant who set up Britain's biggest independent Internet service provider with £20,000 capital six years ago yesterday made £33m by selling the business to ScottishPower.

Scottish Telecom, the telecoms arm of ScottishPower, is paying £66m to acquire Demon Internet from Cliff Stanford, its founder and former managing director. Mr Stanford, who owned half the business, will continue to act as a consultant to Demon,

although he plans to launch a new business venture next week.

Some 250 of Demon's 570 employees will also make windfalls averaging about £10,000 each from share options in the business.

From a standing start in 1992 Demon has become the best-known of the Internet service providers and the biggest "dial-up" company in Europe with 180,000 subscribers out of the estimated 300,000 who connect to the web through Internet service providers. It pioneered low-cost, flat-rate connection to the Internet in

Britain and the Netherlands. About 40 per cent of its users are business customers and Demon generates 6 million minutes of telephone usage a day.

In the year to 30 April 1997 it made a bottom line loss of £2.8m on sales of £18m after spending £4.6m on a transatlantic link to the United States.

Roy Bliss, managing director of Demon, said the company was operating more or less profitably now and maintained it could have continued on its own. But he said the takeover by ScottishPower would secure its future in a market which by some

estimates is growing at 10 per cent a month and attracting the likes of British Telecom, which has launched its own Internet service provider.

The UK Internet access market is increasingly expected to be dominated by large players with bigger subscriber bases, deeper pockets and the resources to introduce additional services.

Scottish Telecom is already a significant player in the telecoms market north of the border and on-line information is a growing part of its business. Through its subsidiary, The Information Service, it claims

to account for 22 per cent of the premium rate call traffic in the UK.

It also has a joint venture with the publisher DC Thomson called Scotland On Line, the leading Scottish Internet service, and took over business and financial information service provider Prestel On Line two years ago.

The Demon deal takes ScottishPower's investment in Scottish Telecom to £150m since its launch in 1994, of which £90m has been spent on acquisitions. It now has a staff of 1,500 and recently unveiled plans to develop a fibre optic network

throughout the Highlands and Islands.

Mr Stanford, 44, who grew up in Southend-on-Sea and became an artillerist clerk in a firm of accountants straight after leaving school, ran his own software business before latching on to the potential of the Internet. He now lives in Belgium and said that his only hobbies for the last six years had been "the Internet, the Internet and the Internet".

The other shareholders in Demon are the venture capital group APAX Partners and Giles Todd, who helped found the business with Mr Stanford.

Industry gloom rules out rate rise

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

FRESH evidence yesterday of a sharp downturn in manufacturing all but ruled out the prospect of a rise in interest rates next week. In the second gloomy survey of industry this week, the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply said manufacturing activity declined in April for the first time in almost two years.

This week result, combined with a burst of optimism about the German mark as ministers gathered for the euro decision weekend in Brussels, took the pound to its lowest level for more than two months. It ended more than 3 pennings lower

faster rate in April than the previous month, while the growth of output tailed off sharply. Just 13 per cent of firms said their export orders had risen last month.

The output index dropped from 56.8 to 50.2, with consumer goods the only sector to report rising output. Employment also fell for the second month running.

The survey confirmed evidence from a Confederation of British Industry survey earlier this week that the strong pound and falling exports are hampering manufacturing. "The prospects for the future are not good," said Peter Thomson, the CIPS director general.

Separate statistics yesterday showing that March's increase in consumer credit was the highest since the monthly figures began, and that new mortgage commitments had risen sharply, did not sway analysts' verdict about the outcome of next week's meeting of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee.

Consumer credit leapt by £1.4bn in March, taking the annual rate of increase up from 15.8 per cent to 16.6 per cent.

As retail sales rose less than expected during the month, analysts speculated that the credit jump reflected either non-retail spending such as holidays and cars or further take-up of cheap credit deals on the high street.

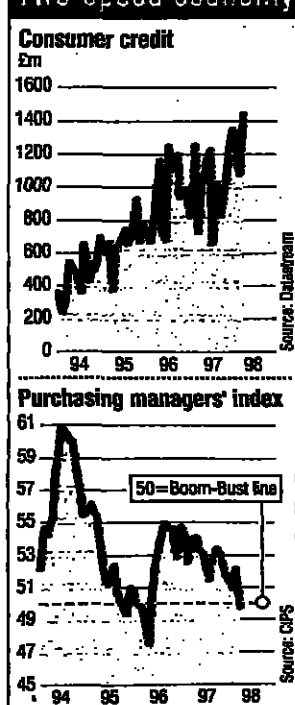
Total new mortgage lending dipped slightly to £1.8bn in March, the Bank of England reported, its growth rate edging down to 5.7 per cent. However, the number of new mortgage commitments increased.

"The fact that consumers are still happy to borrow is consistent with the message from the latest consumer confidence numbers, which are still reasonably strong," said Jonathan Lloyne, an economist at HSBC Markets.

However, the latest figures have removed most analysts' concerns about the risk of a further rise in the cost of borrowing, even though some parts of the economy obviously remain much stronger than the embattled manufacturing sector.

The retreat this week of earlier fears that the Federal Reserve would raise US interest rates has also helped shift sentiment in the UK.

Two-speed economy

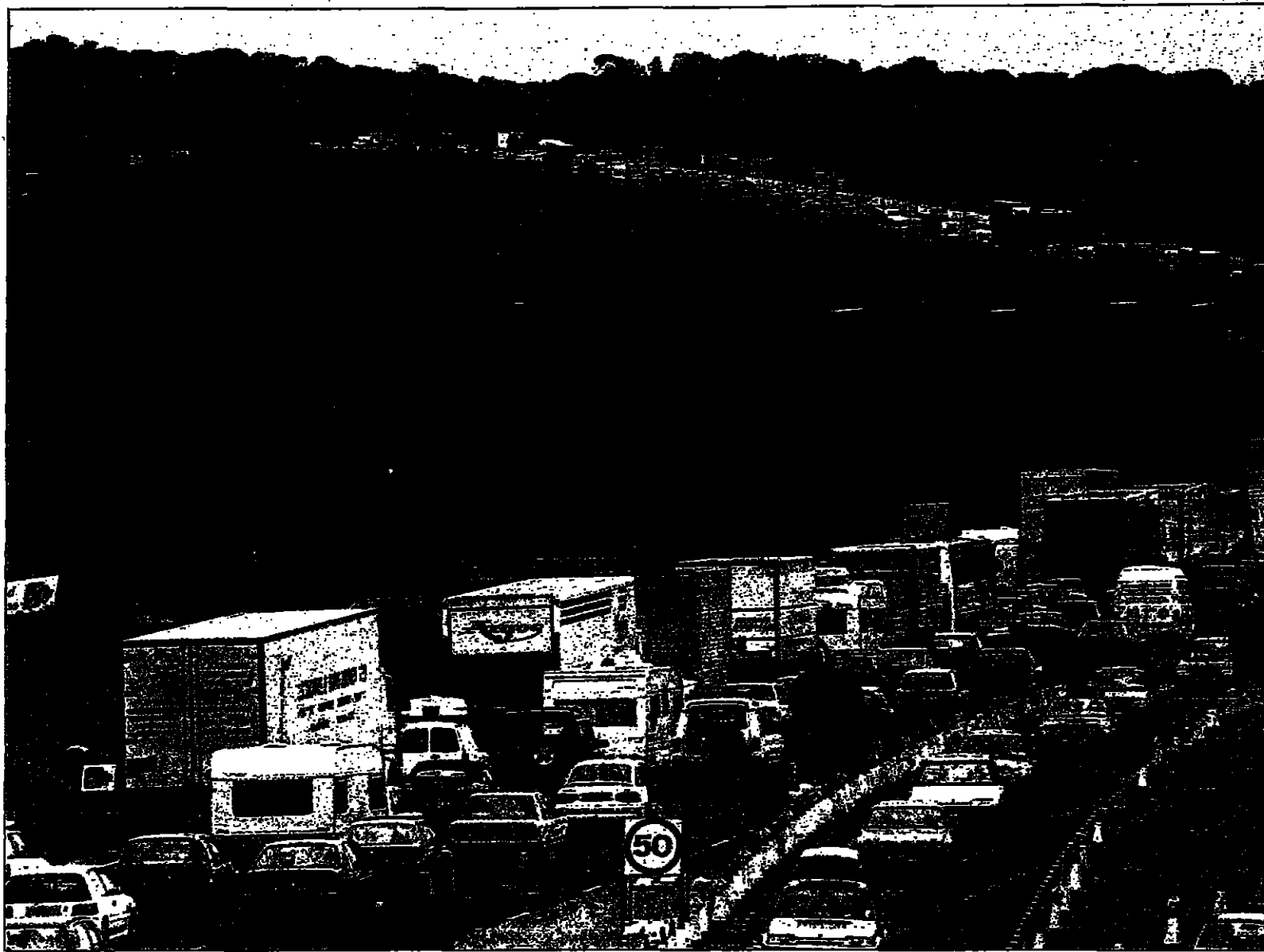


at DM2.96, while sterling's index against a range of currencies fell a full point to 105.3. The May Day holiday on the Continent meant the currency markets were quiet.

The FTSE-100 index climbed back above 6,000. It ended 82 points higher at 6,010.3.

The CIPS Purchasing Managers' Index declined below the 50 "boom-bust" line of 50 to 49.5, compared with 52.0 in March. The main reason for the weaker result was a drop in new orders and output.

Export orders fell at an even



Road to riches: The purchase of Streamline makes Jarvis a £1bn company

Photograph: John Lawrence

Streamline sale nets managers £26m

By Michael Harrison

A GROUP of managers and employees at Streamline, the road cones and highway maintenance company, were £26m richer yesterday after the business was taken over in a £184m deal by the construction and rail group Jarvis.

Streamline, a management buy-out from Shell in 1993 which subsequently floated on the stock market in 1996, is 14 per

cent owned by Terry Simpson, its chief executive, and 50 other managers and senior employees.

The acquisition will turn Jarvis into a £1bn company with interests spanning rail, construction, road services and specialist building materials.

Streamline has four main businesses - road maintenance, road marking, roadside signs and special road services such as bus and cycle lanes and sleeping policemen.

The company has contracts to maintain road networks in eight shire counties and has also won three road maintenance contracts let by the Highways Agency. The maintenance agreements cover everything from repairing potholes to accident clearance and gritting and include looking after some of the busiest roads in London from the North Circular Road and Marylebone Road to the stretches of the A1 and M1 be-

tween the capital and the M25.

Mr Simpson, who will join the board of Jarvis, said that although road marking might seem like a simple business it involved a lot of technology. "There is more to a white line than meets the eye," he added.

Jarvis is paying for Streamline with cash and shares and has acceptances from shareholders holding a third of the equity which are binding even if a higher rival offer is made.

Jarvis, led by Paris Moayed, has grown from a small construction group into one of the country's biggest transport maintenance companies. It snapped up five of the 13 British Rail maintenance and track renewal companies sold off at privatisation. Mr Moayed said the Streamline deal would take it into Europe and the Far East and opened up the possibility of tendering for toll road management contracts.

Another fund manager said: "We would want at least 650p a share to make an offer worthwhile."

Anthony de Larrinaga, media analyst at Panmure Gordon, said: "580p looks too low, despite the pain we have all suffered."

"After all, EMI is the largest music publisher in the world - and there is growing demand for music rights."

EMI's share slipped 7.5p to 600.5p yesterday as some analysts expressed doubts that a firm offer for the company would emerge.

£3.5m pledge to sick Flextech chief

By Paul McCann
Media Editor

ROGER LUARD, who took Flextech from an obscure oil services company to a £800m pay-television giant, has been offered what is probably Britain's biggest ever sick-pay cheque.

Mr Luard, 49, Flextech's chief executive, has been fighting an inflammatory eye condition since January that threatens to impair his visual field. Doctors have told him he needs to leave work for more advanced treatment. The company's board announced yesterday that it had made him an offer of £3.5m if he cannot return to work by 31 December.

The settlement would buy out his existing share options and bonus scheme.

The company emphasised it was hopeful that Mr Luard would make a quick recovery and would be back before the deadline. A spokeswoman said the announcement had been made for the benefit of the City and to reassure Mr Luard.

In the interim the company will be managed by Brent Harman, managing director, television, and Mark Luiz, finance director.

They will report to Adam Singer, Flextech's executive chairman since last year.

Mr Singer said: "Roger is receiving treatment for his eye condition and it is important that he has proper time to recuperate. The company and shareholders wish Roger a speedy recovery and a quick return to work."

Flextech provides 16 pay-television channels to 25 million viewers in the UK and Europe and is the biggest supplier of pay-television programmes in the UK. Its channels include the archive service Bravo, the women's lifestyle channel Living and the teenage channel Trouble.

Mr Luard guided Flextech to its present size with the backing of Flextech's major shareholder Telecommunications International, the international arm of John Malone's TCI group, the biggest cable TV company in the world.



Luard: Pay-off if he cannot return by 31 December

Biotech defies calls to sack McCullagh

By Andrew Yates

BRITISH BIOTECH confirmed yesterday that it had no plans to sack Keith McCullagh, its chief executive, despite growing pressure to do so from some institutional shareholders.

The spokeswoman for the group said that it plans to rush out a circular to shareholders "as soon as possible" to counter allegations by Dr Andrew Millar, its former clinical research director who has attacked the way British Biotech has handled its drug development programme.

However British Biotech is not planning to unveil any man-

agement changes in the circular. Instead it will cover its approach to the research and development programme and include a year end cash balance.

However the group still appears to be on a collision course with some institutional shareholders who are unhappy with Mr McCullagh's present role.

British Biotech acknowledged yesterday that some of its directors could face legal action in the US from the Securities and Exchange Commission which has launched an investigation into allegations that press releases from the group painted an over-optimistic picture of the prospects for marimastat, a cancer treatment.

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6010.30	82.00	1.38	6150.50	4382.80	3.35
FTSE 250	5653.00	42.20	0.75	5815.00	4384.20	2.87
FTSE 350	2885.20	36.10	1.26	2938.70	2141.80	3.27
FTSE All Share	2622.77	33.70	1.21	2681.12	2108.88	3.25
FTSE Smallcap	2856.90	11.00	0.42	2845.50	2182.10	2.96
FTSE Realind	1428.80	8.30	0.59	1417.30	1225.20	3.19
FTSE AIM	1083.70	3.60	0.33	1095.70	955.90	1.07
Dow Jones	9100.24	32.63	0.36	9213.33	8913.87	1.53
Nikkei	15801.10	42.16	0.26	15910.79	14488.21	0.97
Hang Seng	10553.38	180.00	1.72	10820.51	7915.12	2.77
Dax	5107.44	-1.04	-0.02	5442.00	3448.66	1.52

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 months 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	3 months 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	3 months 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
UK 7.47 0.91 7.42 0.36	UK 5.99 -0.12 5.90 -0.40 5.67 -1.01 5.94 -0.98	US 6.59 0.04 6.54 -0.12 1.70 -0.81 2.31 -0.72
Germany 3.65 0.44 3.97 0.60	Germany 4.59 -0.52 5.54 -1.14	

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm
Dollar 1.6675 -0.50c 1.6242	Stirling 0.5987 +0.12p 0.6157	Gold 385.85 -0.90 340.45
Q-Mark 2.9655 -3.44p 2.7841	Q-Mark 1.7792 -1.36p 1.7222	Yen 133.00 +0.50 126.54
Yen 221.86 +0.41 205.95	Yen 133.00 +0.50 126.54	
£ index 106.50 0.00 99.70	£ index 109.50 0.00 105.90	

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.4735	Malta (lira)	0.6317
Austria (schilling)	20.43	Median (nuevo peso)	12.92
Belgium (franc)	60.08	Netherlands (guilder)	3.2724
Canada (\$)	2.3320	New Zealand (\$)	2.8922
Cyprus (pound)	0.8498	Norway (krone)	12.17
Denmark (krone)	11.16	Portugal (escudo)	206.84
Finland (markka)	8.9884	Saudi Arabia (riyal)	6.0917
France (franc)	9.7495	Singapore (\$)	2.5076
Germany (mark)	2.9188	Spain (peseta)	246.61
Greece (drachma)	504.92	South Africa (rand)	8.1331
Hong Kong (\$)	12.58	Sweden (krone)	12.68
India (rupee)	1.1526	Switzerland (franc)	2.4435
Indonesia (rupiah)	61.01	Thailand (baht)	56.55
Israel (shekel)	5.7188	Turkey (lira)	2884
Italy (lira)	2884	Turkey (lira)	2884
Japan (yen)	218.13	USA (\$)	1.5331
Malaysia (ringgit)	5.8902		

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

أخبار من الأناضول



**JEREMY
WARNER**
ON WHY
EVERYONE IS UP
IN ARMS OVER
THE STOCK
EXCHANGE, AND
WHY ONE
REGULATOR GETS
MORE PRAISE
THAN ANOTHER

Why the Stock Exchange is a national disgrace

IT HAS not been a good week for Gavin Casey, chief executive of the London Stock Exchange. First came a survey of leading fund managers which found many to be damning in their criticism of the exchange's new "order-driven" trading system. Then "TradePoint", a competitor to the exchange, said its research showed considerable dissatisfaction among institutional investors with the new set-up.

But the coup de grace came from Philip Augur, group managing director of Schroders Securities. "The Stock Exchange should consider very carefully whether the 30 per cent market share for SETS (the new order-driven system) and the apparent worsening of spreads for institutional investors is consistent with its duties and will be sufficient to prevent an Office of Fair Trading inquiry," he said in one of the most damning letters about the exchange I have ever seen aired publicly in the City.

How is it that the exchange, whose purpose it is to provide a public service system for the trading of securities, has come to attract such criticism, some of the fiercest since it was forced to abandon fixed commissions and dual capacity in the mid 1980s?

Actually, there is nothing wrong with the new system as such. Technically it works just fine, and despite early concern that it badly disadvantaged small retail investors, it is now bedding down in a way

which is probably mildly beneficial to them. Ironically, the problems are occurring with big institutional investors. Since it was pressure from them, and the threat that they would move their business to the order-driven systems of the Continental bourses, which caused the exchange to introduce the new system in the first place, this is something of a turn up for the books.

The Stock Exchange claims that retail trades are typically being done under the new system on a spread (the difference between the offer and bid price) which is 15 per cent better than the old, quote-driven way of trading. But according to Mr Augur's letter, that is not the case for institutional investors, who on his calculations have seen the spread roughly double in size since the new system came into being.

Partly as a result of this, the order book has failed to gain the level of trade and liquidity required to make it attractive to those dealing in larger blocks of shares. Since the order book is not allowing institutions to deal in the quantities they require, they are forced to fall back on the old quote-driven system, or to deal off-market entirely. The order book is for many becoming little more than a sounding board for market makers and others to find out who's buying and selling. The main business is then done away from the book.

So what's all the fuss about? If institu-

tions don't like the new system, there's always the old one to fall back on, isn't there? Unfortunately the old system, which obliged market-makers to deal at published prices, is no longer being enforced, officially because the exchange wants to encourage use of SETS. Market-makers can pick and choose who they deal with, and because prices are no longer transparent, they can deal at whatever level the market will take. Market-making is suddenly a highly profitable business. Meanwhile, everyone else is being ripped off.

In essence, the Stock Exchange has become a hostage to three or four powerful market-makers. It is their interests, rather than those of the investment community as a whole, which the exchange now serves. The situation is a disgrace and demands government action. The Office of Fair Trading is already investigating the City's underwriting cartel, but the sums involved here are an irrelevance set alongside the huge amounts being traded through the market each day. Come on Mr Bridgeman. Do something about it, because the Stock Exchange certainly doesn't look as if it is going to move on its own.

THE MOST striking thing about John Battle's advertisement yesterday for the first energy regulator, taking in both gas

and electricity regulation, was not the fact of the announcement at all. Rather it was in what the minister for science, energy and industry had to say about the two present incumbents as head of gas and electricity regulation.

First, Professor Stephen Littlechild, director general of electricity supply. Mr Battle positively overflows with praise for the bearded Prof. "I would like to put on record my strong appreciation of his contribution made over many years"... blablah, blablah. Can Mr Battle really be referring to the same man? Stephen Littlechild is best remembered in the City and elsewhere as the regulator who so profoundly misjudged his first review of prices in the electricity industry that within months he was forced to re-review the review, which had been generous in the extreme to the companies and their shareholders. Furthermore, he chose to announce this slap bang in the middle of the Government's sale of shares in PowerGen and National Power, thus causing the City to think, albeit briefly, it had been sold a pup. Indeed, it is him Mr Battle has in mind.

To be fair, Professor Littlechild is not entirely without his good points. He is the man who originally invented the formula on which all price regulation of utilities is based in the UK. The concept has since been much used elsewhere in the world.

Furthermore it has been instrumental in yielding massive price reductions across the utilities, enormously improving the efficiency of these industries and thus the competitiveness of the UK economy. So we owe him a debt as a thinker. It was in the practice that he may have left something to be desired. The judgement of history is a harsh one; fortunately for Prof Littlechild, Mr Battle's is not.

With Clare Spottiswoode, director general of gas supply, it is rather the other way round. She's the one who sent roses to a senior civil servant at the Department of Energy, is invariably described as the laughing regulator, and British Gas liked to depict as clean round the bend. Her achievement is that she took on British Gas and won. That was good not just for the consumer, but arguably for British Gas as well. Both halves of the since demerged group - distribution and sales - seem to be thriving on their own.

This is what Mr Battle has to say about her. "I should also like to acknowledge the work of Clare Spottiswoode, whose five-year contract as director general of gas supply comes to an end on 31 October." There's a bit more than this, but not much. Presumably there's something personal here, for of the two regulators, Ms Spottiswoode seems to have the better record. Perhaps Mr Battle would care to tell us about it.

Single watchdog for energy prices

By Michael Harrison

THE GAS regulator Clare Spottiswoode and her opposite number in electricity, Professor Stephen Littlechild, are to be replaced by a single energy regulator, the Government confirmed yesterday.

The search for a candidate to take on the £120,000-a-year post has already begun with the appointment of headhunters. An appointment is hoped to be made before the autumn.

The widely anticipated move follows the decision outlined in last month's utility green paper to merge Ofgas and Ofgas into one body following the liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets.

Ms Spottiswoode's £96,000-a-year contract ends on 31 October and she had already made it plain to friends and colleagues that she did not intend to stay on either at Ofgas or as head of the combined regulator.

Professor Littlechild's £109,000-a-year contract does not expire until August. He has agreed to stay on, probably until the end of the year, to ensure an orderly transition and to oversee the opening up of domestic competition in electricity.

Advertisements for the new energy regulator's job call for someone with an understand-

ing of how government and regulation operate and who is "an excellent communicator and of unquestioned integrity".

A possible candidate is Anna Walker, former deputy director general of the telecoms regulator Ofcom, now conducting the Government's energy review.

Whitehall officials stressed yesterday that Professor Littlechild's decision to leave was his own and that ministers would have liked him to stay on. Colleagues say that he may move into consultancy, perhaps for one of the big integrated US power utilities.

The person appointed will initially take over as head of Ofgas and then move into the job of combined regulator. The Government has left open the possibility of replacing the post of individual regulator with a

board or commission in which case the job will be to chair the new body.

Ms Spottiswoode's departure became inevitable after she was overruled by the Energy Minister John Battle in a dispute over the marketing of gas and electricity. She had wanted to prevent electricity companies from selling gas to customers until their own markets were open to competition.

Announcing the changes yesterday Mr Battle was effusive in his thanks to Professor Littlechild, recording his "strong appreciation" of his contribution and the "key role" he played in improving service and lowering prices.

His comments about Ms Spottiswoode were more perfunctory.

Jeremy Warner, this page



Degrees of praise: Spottiswoode and Littlechild



BAT says the collapse of the US proposals would make smoking easier for teenagers

BAT warns of US black market

By Andrew Verity

BAT Industries, the British cigarette giant, yesterday claimed the US would develop a black market in tobacco for teenagers because of the collapse of a \$367.5bn (£220m) legal settlement with the industry.

Lord Cairns, chairman of BAT, said "politics got in the way of common sense" when the deal collapsed last month. "The proposals suggested by the Senate combine huge taxes with a mammoth bureaucracy and would result in an inevitable black market which, perversely, would make cigarettes more accessible to teenagers," he said.

BAT has warned of bank-

ruptcy for the whole US tobacco industry if the Senate goes ahead with plans for a tougher, legislated settlement. If the industry complies with the proposals, the cost is expected to exceed \$600bn.

The first settlement, agreed in June 1997, gave tobacco companies exemption from future class actions for damages caused by cigarettes. The Senate's new proposals would remove that protection.

BAT shares rose after it reported better-than-expected first quarter profits of £573m, a two per cent fall. Profits had been expected to fall to £560m in comparison with last year, when BAT sold First Federal, a US savings and loan association.

Sales of BAT's US products - Kool, GPC, Misty and Capri - slumped by 10 per cent to 16 billion cigarettes after rivals launched new brands.

Results were bolstered by the group's financial services wing, British American Financial Services (BAFS), which saw profits leap by 16 per cent to £298m. BAFS is set to merge with Zurich Financial Services on June 12. Zurich will take a 57 per cent stake.

Eagle Star, an insurance subsidiary of BAFS, said claims from the April floods would be lower than feared. If other insurers have a similar exposure, the total cost of the floods will be £300m. Damage was at first expected to come to £500m.

Baring Tribune offers investors chance to sell

BARING TRIBUNE Investment Trust yesterday launched a fresh scheme to beat off arbitrageurs seeking to break up the £300m vehicle. BART is offering investors the choice of staying with the trust or selling out at a 5 per cent discount. Last month the trust beat off an attempt to break it up by Advance UK, a fund widely seen as an arbitrageur. Under the plan, shareholders who want to exit can opt for a separate pool of investment, run by Barclays Global Investors, which will simply track the FT All-Share Index. They can then sell these shares. The plan marks a new direction in efforts to defend the UK's £60bn investment trust industry.

Hambro Insurance talks

HAMBRO Insurance Services said it had received "a number of approaches" from potential purchasers. It said the approaches - rumoured to include a proposal from Fishers International, the Irish insurer - could lead to an offer for the group. But HIS stressed it was still reviewing a range of options, including a share buyback and joint ventures. Yesterday, the bulk of Hambros, HIS's majority shareholder, was sold to Investec of South Africa.

Equipment hire buyout

GOODE DURRANT, the specialist vehicle hire group, has sold its equipment hire company, Ravenstock Tam, to a management buyout team for around £25.8m. The buyout is led by Dudley Thompson, a former finance director of Goode Durrant. The total proceeds from the sale include borrowings of £9.3m, which will be assumed by the buyer. The disposal will allow Goode Durrant to focus on Northgate, its commercial vehicle hire business.

Hanson seeks to expand

HANSON, the building materials group, said yesterday it was seeking opportunities for expansion. In a statement to the agm, Christopher Collins, the chairman, said Hanson Brick was expected to benefit from an increase in housing starts this year while the US heavy construction materials supplier Cornerstone expected to benefit from the consolidation of the aggregates industry.

Rexam sells operations

REXAM, the packaging and coated products group, has sold its Aluminium Foil and Ovenable Board Tray operations to Ekco Group for £12m in cash. The operations had sales of £18m and net assets of £9.9m in 1997.

£50m Dalgety buyout

DALGETY has agreed to sell its agricultural supply business Dalgety Agriculture to a management buyout team for £50m. The sale means Dalgety will now consist only of PIC International Group, the world's leading pig breeding and genetic improvement business. The management buyout team is led by Paul Kirk and Tony Taylor of Dalgety Agriculture.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Arden (F)	28,242m (28,236m)	3,371m (4,548m)	3.0p (4.3p)	1.3p (1.2p)
Andrews (F)	17,408m (15,638m)	-1,810m (-1,151m)	-2.11p (-2.48p)	nil
BAT Industries (Q)	6,087m (5,877m)	573m (585m)	10.7p (11.1p)	- (-)
Bleasdale Group (F)	20,987m (19,859m)	0,625m (-1,281m)	1.84p (-5.7p)	1.15p (-1.5p)
IOC International (F)	2,495m (2,251m)	-1,78m (0,411m)	-7.2p (-1.5p)	- (-)
SWP Group (F)	8,664m (7,184m)	-1,30m (0,158m)	-0.77p (-0.1p)	nil
Wolfe (Q)	7,072m (7,179m)	754m (482m)	5.67p (3.94p)	- (-)

(F) - Final (Q) - Interim (Q) - Quarterly EPS is pre-exceptionals

Capital buys alternative rock station

By Clifford German

CAPITAL RADIO, the music-based entertainment group whose bid to win control of Richard Branson's Virgin Radio was blocked earlier this year, has agreed to buy 90.1 per cent of Xfm, the London-based alternative rock station, for £14.5m.

The deal is subject to approval by the regulatory authorities. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission rejected Capital's £87m bid for Virgin Radio on competition grounds after deliberating for six

months, just after a consortium led by the Chris Evans, the DJ, had snatched control of Virgin with a slightly lower bid of £85m.

David Mansfield, Capital Radio's chief executive, said the bid for Xfm would not be referred. Acquiring Xfm would give Capital Radio the two FM stations and one AM station in the London area which it is allowed by the Broadcasting Act 1996. Unlike the acquisition of Virgin Radio it would not materially increase the group's share of the listening audience in London or the share of advertising revenue.

Xfm has only 0.6 per cent of the listening hours and even less of the advertising revenues. The station began broadcasting only last September and has lost up to 11 per cent of its initial audience in the last three months. Capital intends to inject more mainstream rock music into Xfm's playlist and introduce its expertise in marketing, advertising sales and programming.

"We are not collecting nuggets of gold here, we are acquiring a seam of gold but we have to dig to find it," a spokesman said.

Chris Parry, Xfm's manag-

ing director and co-founder, will continue as a director and retain the outstanding 9.9 per cent stake in the company.

After taking into account start-up costs, Xfm lost £1.7m in the year to the end of December and the deal is unlikely to have a positive impact on Capital Radio's profits this year.

The shares rose 31.5p to 660.5p. Capital FM is already the market leader in London radio, with 15.5 per cent of the capital's audience, Capital Gold has a further 5.2 per cent. The group controls around 60 per cent of the commercial advertising revenue.

Further blow for Newcastle as fourth director leaves club

By Andrew Yates

NEWCASTLE, the troubled Premier League club rocked by scandal over comments from two senior executives, has lost its fourth director since it came to the stock market a year ago.

The resignation of Jo Dixon, Newcastle's finance director, is another blow to the group's credibility in the City, according to analysts.

The announcement follows the departure of Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall, who left the club in disgrace after making damaging remarks about

team members and fans. Newcastle also lost Mark Corbridge, joint chief executive, last July when he resigned after just seven months with the club.

Ms Dixon, 38, joined Newcastle from National Westminster Bank three years ago and received a £100,000 bonus from Cameron Hall, the majority shareholders in the club, when it floated.

Both Ms Dixon and Newcastle denied her departure had anything to do with the problems that have beset the club. "I have had a great time. But this is my third anniversary here and I wanted to move on," she said.

WHO'S SUING WHO

JOHN WILLCOCK



ARTHUR SCARGILL, President of the National Union of Miners (NUM), has issued a summons against the Charity Commissioners and the Attorney General in his appeal against his suspension as a trustee of two miners' charities.

Mr Scargill was suspended by the Charity Commission last June from being a trustee of "The Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Trust Fund Scheme" and "The Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Convalescent Homes". The miners' leader was also suspended from being chairman of the Homes charity.

In March this year John Morris, QC, the Attorney General, got the backing of the High Court for a scheme to regulate the affairs of the two charities. Mr Scargill's appeal against his suspension is due to reach court this June.

The Charity Commission took its action last year against Mr Scargill over the allegedly inappropriate transfer of £800,000 to the homes fund from the welfare fund.

There are no suggestions that Mr Scargill or anyone else has been involved in any impropriety, but that certain procedures had not been followed.

Mr Scargill and a fellow trustee Frank Cave lodged their appeal this week, claiming in their writ: "There has been no misconduct or mismanagement by the plaintiffs in the administration of either charity."

The writ continues: "It has not been shown that the suspension of the First Plaintiff [Mr Scargill] and subsequent removal of both plaintiffs is or was necessary or desirable for the purpose of protecting the property of either charity."

The writ says that if any misconduct or mismanagement in the running of either charity has taken place, it has not been shown that this has resulted from "any act or omission on the part of the plaintiffs."

The duo also say that it has not been shown by the Charity Commissioners that the pair acted contrary to "the minuted res-

olutions or intentions of the trustees of either charity."

The pair add that they have not "by virtue of their membership of the National Union of Mineworkers or the National Union of Mineworkers (Yorkshire Area), placed or allowed themselves to remain in a position of conflict as trustees."

The writ, issued on behalf of Mr Scargill and Mr Cave by City solicitors Bates Wells & Braithwaite, concludes: "The Charity Commissioners have failed, despite repeated requests from the first plaintiff and the plaintiffs' solicitors, to disclose the substance of all the allegations made against the plaintiffs, in such a form, and in such a way, that he may answer all of them fully."

THE BBC has issued an originating summons against a bust property company in an attempt to obtain a new five-year tenancy agreement over the broadcaster's offices in Great Portland Street, London,

which are owned by the company.

The offices are at Yalding House, 152/156 Great Portland Street and are owned by Borodin Properties, a company in receivership.

In practical terms the receivers Coopers & Lybrand control Borodin, on behalf of the company's creditors.

The BBC originally had a tenancy agreement with Borodin for three years, dating from 6 August 1995. The broadcaster is applying for a new five-year tenancy starting from 12 December 1998, at a rent of £300,000 a year.

Coopers & Lybrand did not comment.

TWO councils in Kent are heading for a court battle over a proposed shopping development.

Shepway District Council has been granted leave to seek a judicial review of Ashford Council's treatment of a major development site at Ashford.

Shepway Council claims that outline

planning consents granted over the site did not provide for a proposed factory outlet centre. QCs involved in the case include William Hicks, Malcolm Spence, Timothy Straker and Michael Fitzgerald.

THE OWNER of a new shopping centre in Guildford has launched a major claim for damages over alleged structural defects against the designers and builders of the development.

Specifically, the owners of the White Lion Walk centre are suing over the design of the atrium roof.

Britel Fund Trustees is suing White Lion Walk and Tarmac, both of Wolverhampton, and Crampin and Pring of Nottingham. Britel is seeking damages for an alleged breach of an agreement dated 6 April 1984, negligence and making negligent misstatements between 1985 and 1987 in respect of the design, the development and the roof at the shopping centre.

A country cure for city children

**Paul Valley's
BRITAIN**



Sheffield: Should the lottery benefit pampered pigs or battered women? A farm in the Peak District that helps deprived and handicapped children provides an interesting case

It was the five-star hotel for pigs which was the final straw. Britain's only national 24-hour helpline for battered women announced this week that it may have to close after being refused a National Lottery grant. To make matters worse, the sum it needed was the same as the Lottery awarded to a pig farm to build luxury pens for 24 porkers, with underfloor heating and snout-operated showers. Supporters of the crisis line, including Ruby Wax, Helena Kennedy QC and the former hostage John McCarthy, protested at a world in which battered women were less important than pampered pigs.

If only life were so simple. There can be little doubt as to the value of the helpline, run by the domestic-violence charity Refuge, which is staffed 365 days a year to refer threatened women to 200 refuges throughout the country. It is run from a light modern office not far from the Embankment, in London, its walls covered with maps showing the nation's refuges and their current bed availability. There, one of its 95 volunteer telephone counsellors, a woman named Vivian, who is by day a secretary with a firm of kitchen installers, gave an account of the grim world she encounters down the line.

"Something like a third of the calls are from a payphone after a woman has walked out with the children and just the clothes they stand in, with nothing more than 20p in her pocket and nowhere to stay for

the night," she said. "Some of the accounts make you want to weep - like the woman who was woken up at midnight and punched in the nose because she hadn't cleaned out the aquarium, or the man who lined his children up on the sofa to watch him beat up their mother."

How could a pig unit compete with that, I wondered as I drove up to Whirlow Hall Farm, which lies at the foot of the Peak District; its 130 acres produce sheep, cattle, barley, soft fruit, potatoes, carrots and other veg. But it is also just four miles from Sheffield city centre and it is run by a charity whose aim is to give disabled and disadvantaged children a taste of country life.

As I arrived, six children with severe physical handicaps, from Oakes Park School, in the city, were emerging from The Barn, in whose 12 purpose-built rooms they had stayed overnight with four teachers. "We got stuck yesterday on that steep hill on the bikes," one youngster rushed out and blurted with wild enthusiasm. He pointed to the hill, which was the gentlest of inclines, albeit a little slippery with mud. "Just walking on different surfaces is an adventure for these children," explained one of the teachers, Pauline Galbraith, as she rallied the group for an expedition of pond-dipping. "Children who come to stay here talk about it for years to come."

In the field nearby, one of the adults with severe learning disabilities employed by the farm was unwinding a bale of wire. Over at the



greenhouses, students from Loxley Centre - slow learners in their twenties for whom the commercial world would have no use - were painting the glass to stop the plants inside overheating in the unseasonably hot spring sunshine. In the vegetable garden half a dozen teenagers from Talbot Special School were engaged in activities from meticulous weeding to aimless hoe-waving.

Watching them, a youth called William sat in a wheelchair and gurgled. "He's happy. That's singing," explained his teacher, Kerry Long, "When he's angry - like this morning - he bites you. But he's

much better now. His mother says he's a different person when he's had a day at the farm. Pupils who have no success in the schoolroom find a sense of achievement here. Some are great weeders, others are adept at picking soft fruit, others push wheelbarrows, others feed the animals. There's something which gives each of them a confidence which carries over into their general attitude back at school." Which is why everyone at the farm was taken back by the vehemence of the reaction to their lottery grant.

Whirlow Hall has, until now, been used only to receiving plaudits from the local press and from busi-

nesses such as BT and Sainsbury's, which sponsor it - not to mention the praise of dozens of volunteers who give their time to the farm.

"We just weren't expecting the criticism," said local businessman Alan Alkin, who chairs the Farm Trust. "We applied for money from a different lottery category to the women's refuge. So the comparison is unfair." Nor are they asking for funding for running costs, as the Refuge is, but only for a start-up grant.

"Once we get going, the profits from pig sales will be enough to cover our costs." That highlights the problem

Five-star farm: Whirlow Hall, outside Sheffield, which received a grant to build luxury pens for pigs, much to the disgust of the domestic-violence charity Refuge. Photographs: Guzelian



Refuge has run up against. It too received a lottery start-up grant in 1996. But it has been rejected in its application for a further £597,000 over the next three years. It was not that Refuge failed to appreciate the lottery's distinction between one-off project funding and ongoing revenue funding, said its chief executive, Sandra Horley, but they had to re-apply. "It was our only option. Our backs were up against the wall. This is a life-and-death issue for many desperate women."

There is clearly a policy issue here. The National Lottery Charities Board is now the biggest grant-maker in Europe. It already courts controversy, because the process by which charities apply for cash is so complicated that expert consultants can charge vast fees to help complete the application form. Refuge spent £7,000 processing its application. To add to the rows, the board does not disclose the training or qualifications of its assessors. And it then rejects four out of five applications without explanation. It is "a kangaroo court with no right of appeal" according to Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of the schizophrenia charity SANE, which has been rejected by the Lottery three times now.

But the Refuge row reveals a more deep-seated problem. "They should take some responsibility for ensuring that what they start continues," said Ms Horley. "It's unlike a government, which is stuck with the fact that its spending on public services must continue 90 per cent

unaltered year-on-year; the lottery is doomed by its constant need for publicity to emphasise poverty rather than continuity. "How can you run a social service on this hand-to-mouth basis?" asks Ms Horley.

Back at the farm, two eight-year-olds were discussing whether a pig unit was needed. The boys were from Porter Croft Junior, where most children, said their teacher, Ann Booth, had never spent a night away from home before. "They are from a very poor working-class inner-city area. Many are from single-parent families. And for many English is a second language." The majority had never been on holiday and many had never been to the countryside.

So the boys' analysis on the pig unit was a measure of the achievement of the three days they were there. "What pigs need," pronounced one, named Crewe, "is a swimming pool and a scratching-wall." Akim, his classmate, added: "And a warm place to sleep - and a toilet." Which is pretty much what the new lottery unit will provide, along with access for children in wheelchairs to feed the pigs.

News of the disabled and disadvantaged children at the pig unit placated Ms Horley only momentarily.

"Perhaps there is an argument for that award," she acknowledged, "but what about the £180,000 the lottery has given to a bereaved pet owners helpline?"

Yes, I agreed, that sounded terrible. But perhaps, I decided, it would be best not to make the mistake of going there to find out.

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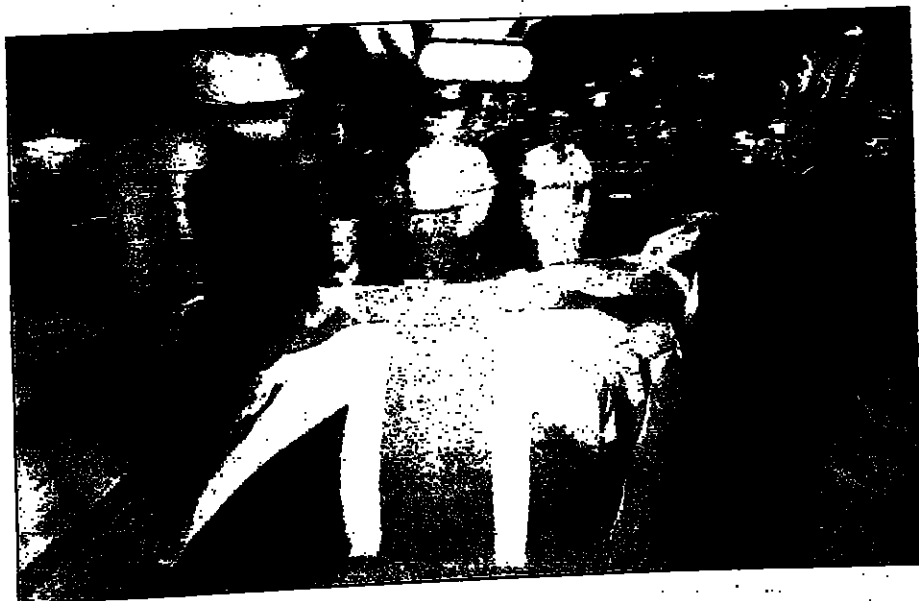
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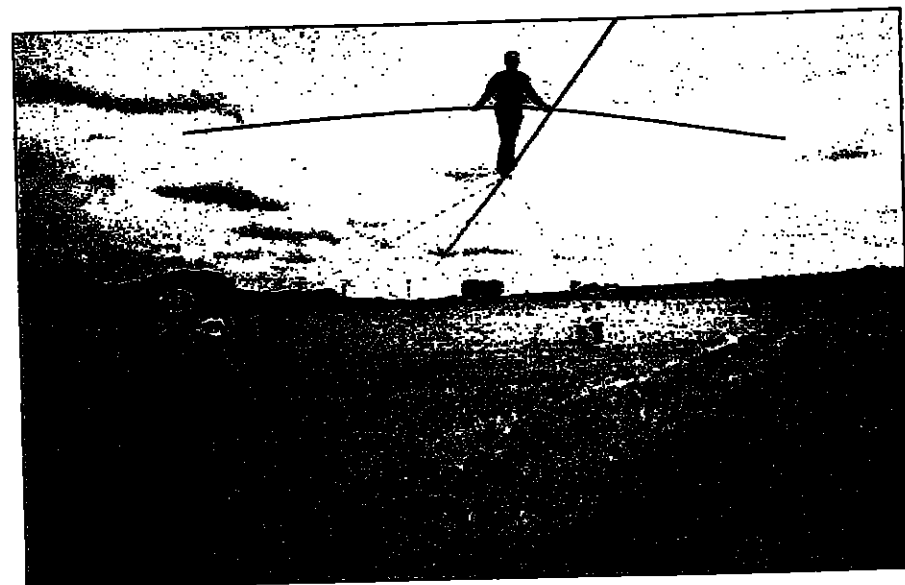
WORLD PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE YEAR



Yesterday we reported that *The Independent* had collected the prize for Best Use Of Photography in the 1998 Newspaper of the Year Awards; today we celebrate our most powerful photographs from abroad. Often it is not the most obvious images that make a picture: Tom Pilston virtually stumbled across expatriate revellers running along a Hong Kong back street celebrating the handover, while in India citizens throughout the country were celebrating the 50th anniversary of independence, captured here by Andrew Burman. Brian Harris was the first to show the world the extent of damage within the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi after the earthquakes, and, on a lighter note, David Rose shared the joy of French acrobats practising near Paris for their epic tightrope crossing of the Thames.

Mairi Fraser

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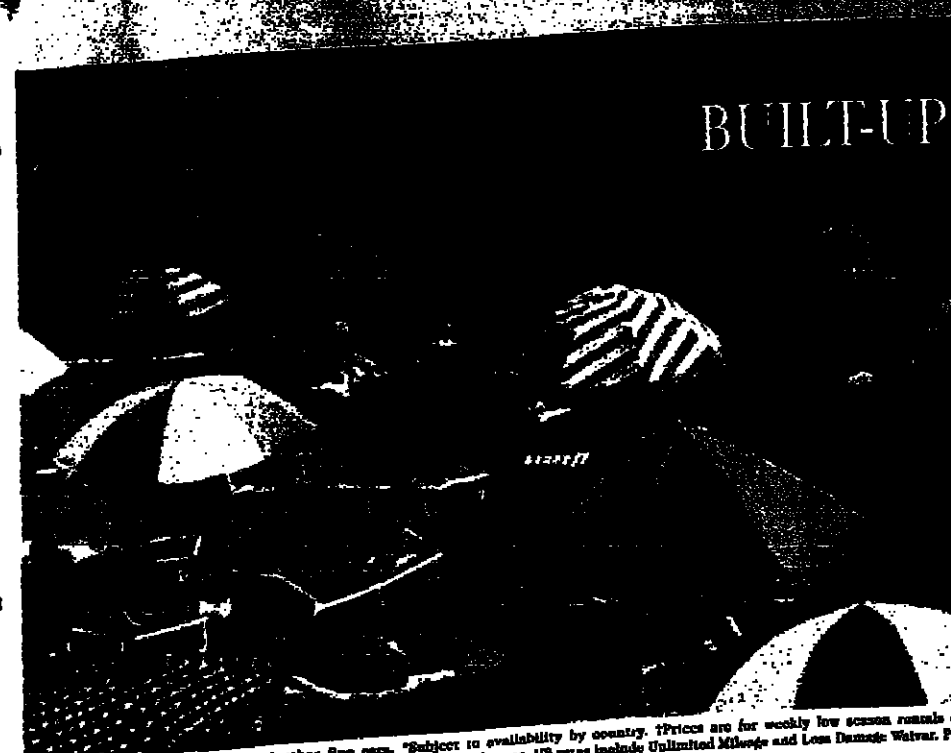
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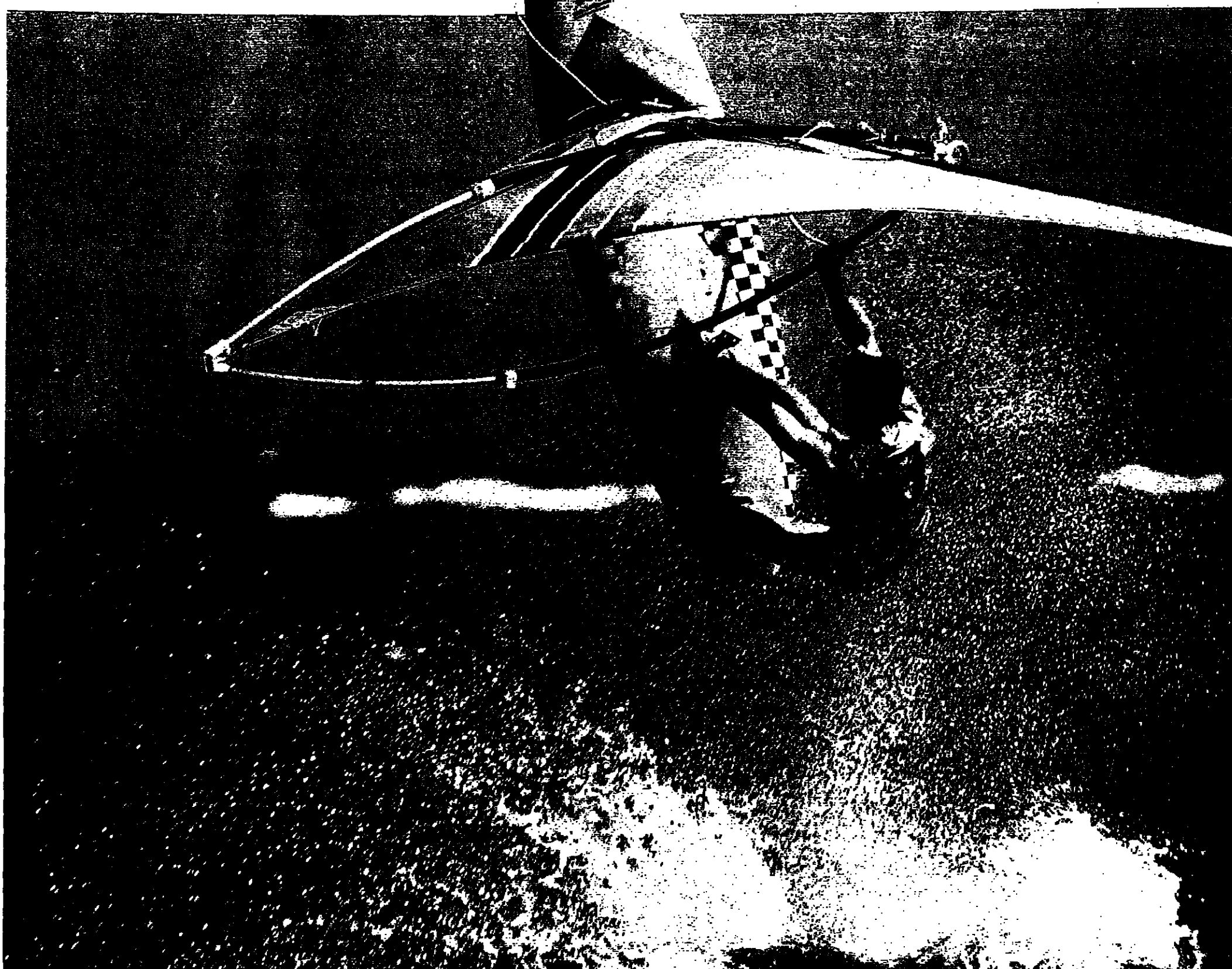
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SIMON CALDER

One soon-to-be-famous hotel features in none of the deluge of summer '99 brochures that submerged my desk this week: the Sultan Palas in southern Turkey. The peaceful residence is just too remote for most holiday-makers and tour operators – which makes it ideal for the makers of a marvellously mischievous new documentary series. The nub of *The Tourist Trap* (Channel 4, Tuesday, 9pm) is: what do German tourists do if a hotel has only half the requisite number of sunbeds? And how do Japanese, American and British holiday-makers cope with the same crisis? In order to confirm or confound national stereotypes, the Sultan Palas Hotel was converted into a human laboratory.

Here's how it worked. The production company, Windfall Films, placed advertisements in the UK, the US, Germany and Japan, offering free holidays. From hundreds of applicants, 30 were chosen from each country. The only condition was that the participants agreed to be filmed, though most of the British contingent seemed to assume it was some sort of timeshare scam.

Each nationality was assigned a separate week at the Sultan Palas, during which everything was engineered to ensure an identical experience to the other groups. When they arrived, they saw a standard television crew. What they didn't see was the 11 concealed cameras and 30 hidden microphones, linked by miles of cable and operated by remote control from the secret bunker where the production team hid for a month. No "docu-soap" this: the programme heralds a whole new TV genre, which you could call a flea-on-the-fly-on-the-wall documentary.

The programme-makers also neglected to tell the cast that among their number were a couple of stooges – actors, briefed to commit all manner of anti-social acts, such as lighting up on a non-smoking excursion coach.

Whatever their effect on future bookings for the Sultan Palas, the results make gripping television. From the evidence of the first programme, though, the British are not going to dazzle with decency. We coped creditably well with the moustachioed proprietor's unnecessarily slumpy welcome kiss to every new arrival, male and female alike (this is Channel 4, remember). But when one of the stooges began stealing drinks from the bar, the British and Americans both connived. The Germans and Japanese respectively ostracised and shopped the offender.

And that hoary old German/sunlounger stereotype? As they quickly discovered, by deftly separating the mattress from the sunbed, the number of loungers can instantly be doubled. Did I catch a muted but triumphant "Vorsprung durch Technik" on one of the hidden microphones?

Gone with the Windwards

"Salut." From beneath the low trees that shade the beach, a tall, stringy character called out to the crew. Stooping, he strode out to meet them, a red bandanna at his neck and thongs on his feet: "Late again, as usual." Three hours patiently teaching novice *planchistes* was no excuse for being late with the lunch.

Thursday lunchtime, and a barbie on the beach. A hundred hungry windsurfers had crashed out in the shade, rasta drums thundering in our ears, memories of the morning's class ringing in our heads.

Welcome to Guadeloupe. This Caribbean island was spotted by French sailors back when a boom was something you heard from an enemy port. Shaped like a butterfly, the island is half rugged mountain, half flat as a crêpe. Around the flat area winds are so big that the explorers called the place Grand' Terre; yet the soaring, rainforest-covered heights of the west of the island block any wind that blows, so the sailors named it Basse Terre. Today, the wind still blows, and the entrepreneurs of Grand' Terre's southern coast are cleaning up on catamaran rental, yacht cruising and, most of all, windsurfing.

The Guadeloupeans have taken to windsurfing like wind-assisted ducks to water. The Alize blows from the east pretty much all year, and at St François, halfway along the southern strip, a large lagoon provides

Guadeloupe is a water sports paradise. Dave Harvey found it the ideal place to learn how to carve gybe

a playground of flat, shallow water perfect for tubby Europeans to learn and lean locals to pose.

And windsurfing is the perfect pose. The St François have that easy, effortless grace, carving white arcs in turquoise water just yards from the gallery of sun loungers, flipping fluorescent sails to a new tack with one languid hand, then snapping the rig back into the wind and soaring off to the horizon. While we struggle like gangly schoolboys on a Surrey square and flop into the water, they lark around in baggy shorts and wraparound shades, twisting impossibly into helicopter turns as if Mr Beaufort wound his scale to their orders.

You can, of course, sail anywhere in the Caribbean. But windsurfing is rather more demanding: the wind must be strong close in, and preferably blow across the shore: the best water is flat, protected from Atlantic rollers by a friendly reef. St François has all these.

The first times we came we'd arrive early at the Fanatic Centre to grab a couple of Snakes – the ideal improving board. But dally over the *pain au chocolat*, and you'd lose them to a van full of Germans.

Then one day we noticed a fleet of green-fringed sails gybing in the western end of the lagoon. We followed them back in, beached our Snakes by the hexagonal wooden lobster cages on the fishing port, and walked curiously round the rocks. A volleyball net, a sprawling pavilion surrounded by hundreds of pink, blue and green monofilm wings and racks of boards. Had I died and gone to heaven? Was the Planteur du Paradis I drank at lunch time doing its work? No, we'd stumbled upon the UCPA (Union des Centres Sportifs de Plein Air).

Wherever the tricolour flies, the UCPA has a site on the beach or piste: skiing, sailing, diving, mountain biking, paragliding. At St François £350 a week gets you a clean, simple bungalow *à deux*, three meals designed for *planchistes*, three hours' instruction a day and all the kit you can handle. The Guadeloupe centre sleeps 120, and I counted 90 short boards for experts, as well as more than 100 for the intermediates or beginners that the UCPA's eight instructors teach each week. We found someone who

looked as if they were in charge and booked a fortnight.

The reef is a dream for lessons, popping up obliging little sandbars to perch on 400 yards out. We went out with Thomas who showed us the carve gybe – the holy grail of the sport. It was as if Courtney Walsh had strolled along the beach and offered an impromptu bowling surgery. Dudes just don't give up their secrets this easy, yet there was Patrice teaching the advanced class that helicopter turn. How, I wondered, would they impress the tourists at the hotel now?

There's only so much education a red-blooded Englishman can take, though, and by Thursday it was time for a trip to Les Saintes. A great opportunity to remind the locals that these little islands had a grandstand view of English sailing might in the 1700s, when our boys beat the French and "saved" Jamaica. Nowadays cannons and grapeshot have given way to catamarans and snorkels in the bay, and they'll sell you aphrodisiac cakes as you get off the two-hour ferry. And, oh – ask for a hat. They're the most ridiculous you'll ever find.

The maximum cost of a fortnight, all in, at UCPA Guadeloupe, is £1,113 including flights from Paris. You can book in the UK through Action Vacances on 0161-442 6130.

A plane
Virgin has vowed to undercut Go, British Airways' low-cost offshoot, on flights to Italy and other destinations from London Stansted. Richard Branson signalled a fares war when he told *The Independent* that Virgin Express would offer connections via Brussels from the Essex airport at lower fares than the new no-frills carrier: "We wouldn't take on BA and not give them a run for their money. It'll be much cheaper to go on Virgin Express."

Go (0845 60 54321) begins non-stop flights to Milan on 22 May, and starts flying to Rome the following day. Tickets to both destinations cost £100 return. Virgin Express (0800 891199) is currently selling flights to Milan in May for £95 return.



A boat
Q&A's season of transatlantic crossings between New York and Southampton starts on Thursday with a departure from Manhattan. The first westbound voyage is on 29 May, and sailings continue monthly until 14 December. Call Cunard on 01703 634166.

A train
The first Reader's Page in the Thomas Cook Overseas Timetable has proved intriguing. On Sudan Railways, reports Jean-Philippe Wispelacre, "The train conveys 20 carriages' worth of 1st, 2nd and 3rd class seating and a homicidal dining car. The 713-km journey takes an unbelievable three or four days, depending on how many carriages detach themselves half-way, and whether the driver decides to turn back and collect them."

Mr Wispelacre also counsels against tackling the Sudan-Egypt frontier: "The entire border is sealed and should only be crossed by those capable of outrunning rocket-propelled grenades."

The May/June edition of the timetable is just out, and costs £8.40.

A room
The Club PuntaGrande, on the Canary Island of El Hierro, is said to be the smallest hotel in the world. Just four rooms have been created from what was originally a coastal fort. Corona Holidays (0181-530 3747), which makes the claim, sells a twin room for £42 per night, including breakfast, during most of the coming winter. Readers may wish to get in touch if they believe they have found a smaller hotel.

A meal
While in the Canaries, sample some *viejas* (parrot fish) and *gofio* (bread made with wheat, maize or chick-pea flour) – that's the recommendation of *Get By in Spanish*, an all-in-one language and travel guide

published by BBC Worldwide. The book also warns: "Restaurants have relatively strict opening times, and it is almost impossible to find one that will serve you outside these times." The guide costs £9.99 with an audiotape, £4.99 without.

A week from now...
... you could join a voyage slicing through northern Scotland aboard *Fingal of Caledonia*, a 126-foot Thirties barge that started cruising last week and continues until late October. The vessel sails along the Caledonian Canal between Inverness and Fort William. The voyage lasts six days, with options for hiking, sailing, windsurfing, cycling and canoeing. Most places are taken, but space is available for next Saturday's

departure, price £330 through Caledonian Discovery (01397 772167).

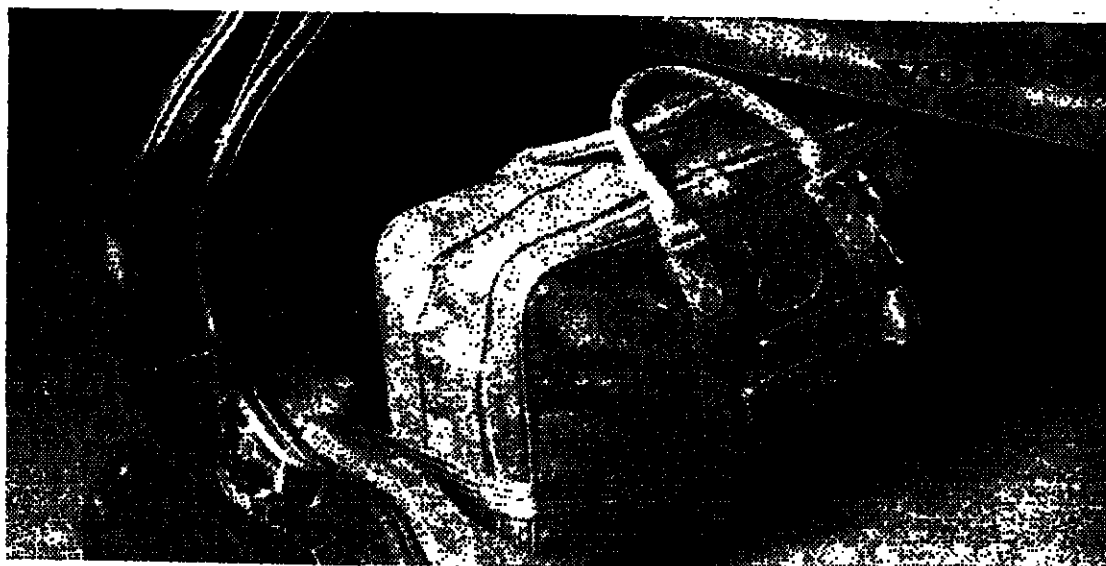
A month from now...
... Ride Worldwide takes its first tour of the summer to the foothills of the Karakorum and the Kalash valley of Pakistan. The price is around £1,200, excluding flights to and from Islamabad; call 0171-735 1144.

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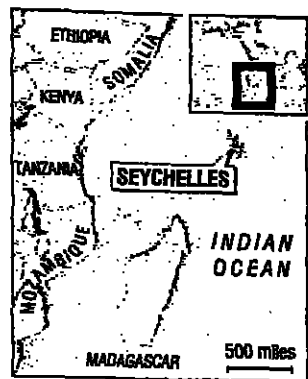
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Islands of the blessed



The Seychelles are paradise, writes Cleo Paskal. But how to decide: birds or parrot fish, swimming or tropical forests? And alas, heaven doesn't come cheap

In the late 19th century, General Charles "Hero of Khartoum" Gordon declared the Seychelles the original Garden of Eden. He based this largely on having taken a good look at the coco-de-mer palm. This is how he described the nut that grows on the female tree: "Exteriorly it is shaped like a heart, when opened out it is like the belly and thighs. Inside is a pink transparent jelly like substance. It is this unique tree which I think is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil."

If he needed further proof, he had only to look at the male coco-de-mer. When it is ready to pollinate the female it grows a long, dangling, er, thingy, which in its most procreative phase is covered in lurid yellowy-red flowers. The coco-de-mer is the national plant of the Seychelles.

But even if botany isn't your favourite indulgence, it's easy to find a private Eden of your own somewhere among the country's 115 or so islands. Geologically, they are spectacular. While the southern part of the chain is your usual perfect coralline tropical island paradise, the northern part is, unusually, granite.

Each island has its speciality, but the best one from which to base yourself is Praslin, a 15-minute flight or a three-hour boat ride from the capital island, Mahe. From there you can take day trips to a range of mini-Eden islands: Cousin, Curieuse, La Digue and others.

Cousin is a bird reserve, a stop-off point for a slew of migratory species and a permanent home to rare fowl such as the Seychelles magpie robin. The birds are so secure on their rat- and cat-free island that some nest on the ground. Ornithologists go a bit nuts here and local rangers are founts of endless knowledge. But if the noise (and smell) of hundreds of thousands of birds doesn't impress, you can track down a giant tortoise. They love having their oddity cold and leathery necks stroked.

Curieuse, a one-time leper colony, is the regional headquarters of the Marine Parks Authority. If you time it right, you can see sea turtles coming in to lay their eggs, or hatchlings scrambling towards the sea.

La Digue, Tony Blair's vacation choice, is a picturesque island with almost no cars but lots of touristy ox-carts. If you fancy biking along the bays without getting run over by manic Seychellois drivers, this'll be your Eden. But be warned: the beaches are beautiful to

look at, yet the island can get very hot and the swimming is lousy compared to the other islands. Tony Blair, no fool he, got around this by renting one of the few air-conditioned places on La Digue on one of the few swimmable beaches.

Some of the best beaches are on Praslin itself. The talc-fine white sandy beach of Côte d'Or bay stretches for miles and fringes the most swimmable waters I have ever been in. The water is warm, calm and heart-achingly clear. But, even so, it is not my personal Seychellois Eden.

The Vallée de Mai, in the heart of Praslin, comes close. It is a Unesco World Heritage Site and home of the only wild coco-de-mer forest. The 800-year-old palm trees create a vaulted canopy that dapples sunlight and shelters from the rain. Well-kept paths follow rivers and wind through pandanus groves. It is silent, except for the rattle of the enormous palms in the wind and the songs of the black parrots and tree frogs. It is like walking through a Hollywood-crafted prehistoric forest: all the atmosphere and none of the danger.

But my own Eden is like one of those ridiculously perfect dreams from childhood. Effortlessly hovering over rippling green glades and dense forests, you see all around you colourful creatures passing by, casting you the occasional curious glance. My Eden is snorkelling in Isle Aux Cocos Marine Park. Just opened to the public, it is accessible and pristine. The park rangers ferried my group to the small beach on Isle aux Cocos from our tour boat moored outside the reef. Overhead, graceful tropic birds with their long white tail feathers played in the thermals.

By the time I had waded out to waist-deep water, I was at the edge of the coral reef. We floated gently a metre or so above the forest of coral, some of it yellow, some blue, some white, all exquisite. A young parrot fish, impossibly turquoise and pink, escorted me as I coasted over swarms of angel fish, blue-striped snapper, gliding rays and hawksbill turtles. I let myself be gradually carried by the current towards the deeper, darker, more complex waters at the far edge of the reef. It was paradise.

Until I spotted the shark. It was like the shadow of a nightmare, and made my heart stop. I looked closer. But not too close. Yep, a white-tipped reef shark. A small one, maybe just over a metre long, probably harmless. But just in case, I headed back to the shallows.

Eden doesn't come cheap. The Seychelles government is focusing on high-end eco-tourism. To keep the country from being overrun by grubby backpackers who won't bring in enough money to justify their strain on the environment, the number of tourist beds has been capped at around 4,200. Often, the cheapest way to go is to book a package tour. For example, in the new Distant Dreams brochure from Cosmos (0161-480 5799), a fortnight, half-board, at the Paradise Sun on Praslin in November 1999 costs £1,999 per person.

Travelling independently, British Airways and Air Seychelles each has two weekly flights from Gatwick to Mahe. Fares are likely to be lower on Air France via Paris; through an agency such as Bridge The World (0171-911 0900), you would pay £631 in June from London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Manchester or Newcastle. In Victoria, on Mahe, I stayed at the Hilltop Guesthouse for around £25 a night. On Praslin, we stayed at the Paradise Sun, which was superb but expensive - around £150 for a double with B&B - and at the Berjaya Praslin Beach which had an Easter special rate of about £70 for a double with half board. On La Digue we stayed at a place I would not recommend. Tony Blair stayed at l'Union self-catering chalets: £205 for a chalet that holds up to four people in two bedrooms, plus £28 per person half board.



Eden-under-sea: coral gardens in the Seychelles

Photographs: Pictures Colour Library

White sands, tasty crabs

Where do you go for wildlife, magnificent beaches and the ultimate cowboys and Indians story? Florida, writes James Fox

The map said I was in Florida, but the waitress sounded pure Georgia as she put the plate of seafood in front of me. "The way I see it, food ain't food if it ain't fried," she drawled.

I was in Julia Mae's on US 98, south of Tallahassee. Hereabouts is where the Florida Panhandle starts, and I had come in search of the strange natural phenomena known as the barrier islands. Stretched out along the coastline of the Panhandle in the Gulf of Mexico, these are composed entirely of dazzling white sand. They are fairly remote and quite unspoilt. They got their name because they form a natural barrier against the storms that can swing in off the Mexican Gulf with great ferocity.

As I drove along the coast of Apalachicola Bay, with Julia Mae's behind me, I had the choice of three islands. I went for the biggest, St George, because I could drive out to it over a four-mile-long causeway at Eastpoint.

Driving past beaches and dunes as white as salt, I felt I was in a TV commercial - everything was dolled up just a little beyond reality.

I had plenty of time to get over the sensation, though, for St George has 27 miles of unspoilt beaches. After a while I ditched the car and went for a walk along a beach. I might have been Alexander Selkirk, cast ashore by Dampier; there was nothing but white sand, pounding waves, and the tufts of sea oaks and scrub grasses. At the eastern end of the island I came to the St George Island State Park, which has a nature trail and two campsites. Then I drove back to the small community of cafés and bars that, along with the characterful St George Inn, constitute social life on the island.

Here, over a beer, I chatted with a local fisherman who explained that the water between the islands and the mainland (and they are properly called lagoons, not rivers or canals) is teeming with life. Blue crab, five-lined skink and brown pelican can be found here, as well as the oysters. And what oysters. It is given as a fact that nine out of 10 oysters eaten in Florida are harvested right here.

Two smaller islands attend on St George and reaching

them is more problematical, in that a boat is required. Dog Island, to the east, boasts the highest dunes in all of Florida, and has a small, permanent population. St Vincent, nine miles offshore, has rare sambar deer (originally from India) and the captive-bred red wolf. Naturalists are drawn to the array of habitats - fresh-water lakes, oak ridges, pine forests and cabbage palm hammocks.

Blue crab, five-lined skink and brown pelican can be found here, as well as the oysters. And what oysters ...

Back on the mainland, I travelled west to what is sometimes called the Redneck Riviera, with its predictable Coney-Island-style attractions. Off Palm Beach, though, lies a unique barrier island. By some quirk of coastal currents and topography, Shell Island sees vast quantities of seashells washed up on its seven miles of beaches. Three-hour collecting trips are a regular feature, operating out of a couple of marinas - Captain

Anderson's and Hathaway.

Some of the Panhandle's barrier islands belong to the Gulf Islands National Seashore (in other words, they are a protected natural treasure) and that is where I was headed next. To get there I made for Pensacola, more than 200 miles from Tallahassee and within spitting distance of the Alabama state line. From there I took the three-mile-

more than 290 species of bird spotted here. And Geronimo was brought here in 1886.

Twenty minutes later I was heading west towards Fort Pickens, where he was held. I felt like a lone cowboy riding into a ghost town, as I approached this forbidding-looking place. There was not a soul in sight.

I locked the car and started towards a sign announcing "Visitors' Center". Inside, an elderly lady behind the desk seemed glad to see me. And to talk about Geronimo. Oh, he was a bad Indian, and no mistake; the Apaches were the cruellest. Why, they made the little boys pull the legs off - did she say chickens? "Take the passage opposite till you come to a gate marked number four," she said eventually. "That's where he lived."

Geronimo's quarters consisted of a couple of rooms linked by a dark passageway. I stood in the larger of the two, in the dim light from the low, barred window. Even at midday it was dark enough to give me camera shake. I was glad to get out of the place and

breathe again. On an open expanse of ground, beside a battery, a cannon stood as though ready for action.

Geronimo had strolled these very grounds, becoming something of a tourist attraction. By all accounts, he was a canny old operator and capitalised financially on his new-found fame.

Geronimo, ospreys, oysters: the Panhandle barrier islands may not be everyone's cup of tea. Don't go there if you want the unrelenting glitz

and glamour of the Gold Coast or the ersatz attractions of Disneyworld. But for a sense of adventure, nature in the raw and room to roam without trampling over other holiday-makers, you can't do much better in the US.

Flights to Miami are being sold cheaply during May, with discount agents offering BA non-stops from Gatwick or Heathrow for under £300. Car rental is around £30 per day, fully inclusive.

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48 hours in Nice



Nice, a curious mixture of Mediterranean village and affluent city

Photograph: Ellen Rooney/Robert Harding Picture Library

People-watch on the promenade, contemplate the colours of Chagall's stained glass, and take a cruise to Saint-Tropez. Cathy Packe makes a spring visit to the home of dainty biscuits

Why go now?

Early summer is perfect in the south of France because you won't find it full of French tourists; they don't arrive until July and August, when they pour on to the autoroutes from the north, and stay for a month. You should also be able to avoid the World Cup if you wish (unbelievably, there are people who couldn't care less about football); the nearest matches are being played three hours along the coast in Marseille.

Beam down

The cheapest flights from the UK are operated by EasyJet (0990 292929) out of Liverpool: in May there is a promotional fare of £29 one way. The airline also flies from Luton, and fares start at £49 one way. British Airways flies from Heathrow and Gatwick, and British Midland operates a code-share from Heathrow with Air France. From the airport – conveniently placed at one end of the Baie des Anges – it is a short bus ride into the city centre. Buses leave every 20 minutes from just outside the arrivals hall, and stop at various points along the Promenade des Anglais before turning into the place Masséna.

Alternatively, pay £109 from London by train via Lille or Paris with Eurostar (0345 303030).

Get your bearings

Nice nestles between the sea and the mountains, equidistant from Cannes and the Italian border. Even in summer, the peaks of the Alps are covered with snow. The town is a curious mixture of old Mediterranean village and affluent city, with an extraordinarily grotty part in the middle. On the seafront, half-way round the bay, is the casino, and off to the side is the place Masséna, more of a comma than a square. The main commercial street, the avenue Jean Médecin, goes off it at right angles, and leads up to the station and into the hills beyond.

Check in

You can pay as much or as little as you want for a hotel in Nice. The grandest is the Hôtel Negresco at 37 promenade des Anglais (00 334 93 16 64 00), overlooking the bay and with its own private beach, but if you are not planning to spend your entire stay in the hotel itself, there are other places to be. My favourite area is just around the place Masséna, which is handy for the beach, the old town, and the bus back to the airport. Try the Hôtel Kent at 16 rue Chauvain (00 334 93 80 76), or the slightly cheaper Hôtel Acanthe (00 334 93 62 22 44) which is farther down the same road.

Take a hike

Aim in the direction of the old town, and meander through the streets. Go in the morning and drift round the market in the cours Saleya. Six days a week the stalls have mimosa, bougainvillea, honey, local wine, and vegetables that make you want to buy a bagful and start making ratatouille. On Mondays, produce stalls make way for the flea market.

Lunch on the run

Ignoring the incongruous Cyber Café Internet, and the ubiquitous McDonald's, there are any number of cafés on the cours Saleya where you could stop for a pizza or a salade niçoise and a carafe of Côtes de Provence. If you only want a snack and don't feel like sitting down, treat yourself to a piece of socca from Teresa, who serves slices from her hot plate in the middle of the market. A socca is a local speciality, rather like a pancake but made from chickpeas, which leaves it slightly sticky in the middle; it is liberally peppered.

Cultural afternoon

There are several worthwhile museums to visit, should you feel the urge to tear yourself away from the beach. Like many places on the Côte d'Azur, Nice has been the home of various artists, and there are interesting galleries containing the work of both Matisse and Chagall. They can be reached on the number 15 bus which goes up towards Cimiez, although if you have the energy, it's possible to walk from the centre of town. Of the two, the Chagall museum is smaller, and, I think, more impressive – there is some beautiful stained glass, and a lovely music room with a piano decorated by the painter.

Window shopping

Best starting-point for scrutinising the world of haute couture is the aptly named rue Paradis, where you will find Chanel, Cacharel, Sonia Rykiel and many more. They all have their own boutiques, and you will find a selection of designer clothes at Gladys Falck, Yves Saint Laurent are on the avenue de Suède. The windows in Galeries Lafayette, on avenue Jean Médecin, are nowhere near as appealing, but the prices may be more manageable. If you want a tacky souvenir, go into the food hall in the basement where they are currently selling Cuvée Football, a red or red vin de pays from the region, in a football-shaped bottle – sadly, not life-sized – for £29.50.

An aperitif

The bar du Donjon is at the top of the hill known as Le Château. As you face the sea, you can see along the Baie des Anges way down to your right, and the harbour below to the left. You can walk up the hill if you like, but there is a lift. It will cost you £3.50 in each direction, and it stays open until dusk. The view is worth seeing in daylight, but hang on as it starts to get dark, and you will see the lights switched on along the Promenade des Anglais. If you prefer to be part of the view, rather than looking down at it, try one of the bars on the beach itself. The bar at the bar on Opéra-plage always seems particularly good, but this may be the location as much as the quality of the wine.

Demure dinner

Unless you are allergic to seafood, you will find that one of the finest restaurants in town is the Grand Café de Turin, and its annex, Le Petit Turin, in the place Garibaldi. There you can order a mixed plate of various crustacea, many of which you will never have seen before, and the price is fixed according to the size of the oysters you select. For 100F you will have more whelks, sea urchins and mussels than you will ever want to see, accompanied by a dangerous-looking selection of knives, forks and pins with which to encourage them from their shells. If you prefer your food cooked, try L'Olivier, in the same square. There are more tourists, but plenty of atmosphere, in the old town; however, be careful to avoid any restaurant that displays a menu in English.

Sunday morning: go to church

There is an Anglican church in the rue de la Buffa, but unless you particularly need to hear words you are familiar with, the Russian Cathedral, appropriately enough in avenue Nicholas II, off boulevard du Tzarévitch, has a simple service accompanied by haunting Orthodox chants. The onion domes are covered with ceramic tiles rather than gold leaf, but otherwise the cathedral looks as if it has been picked up out of a Moscow suburb and relocated in the sun. There is a service every Sunday at 10am.

Sunday lunch

For a proper French lunch washed down, as it should be, with some of the local wine, try La Crêpe, 22 cours Saleya (00 3314 93 85 49 99). The restaurant is reasonably priced and has a menu full of local specialities.

A walk on the prom

The best walk in the south of France is along the Promenade des Anglais, the pavement that sidles around the Baie des Anges, from the point where the harbour dips into the landscape, right round as far as the airport. Not everyone makes the trip on foot – many cycle or use in-line skates, and there are several places where you can stop to fish, or just sit and watch the world go by. The whole promenade is lined with expensive hotels and apartment buildings, all of which have spectacular balconies. Take a look at the "for sale" notices, and contemplate whether, in the long run, buying your own property is more economical than a series of weekend breaks.

The icing on the cake

What could be more relaxing than a Mediterranean cruise? Stroll round to the harbour and find out what time the next boat is leaving for Saint-Tropez or the Italian coast. The view of the coastline from the water is unforgettable, as you drift past the headlands and islands, with the sun shining on the mountains.

From ferry fodder to the gourmet delights of Dieppe

Hop across the Channel to Normandy for a gourmet feast, suggests Gerard Gilbert

Once upon a time, the port of Dieppe, nestling amongst the not-so-white cliffs of Upper Normandy's "Alabaster Coast" (the sea near the coasts is indeed a sort of alabaster, thanks to the eroding chalk) was a prohibitive four-hour ferry journey away. After the best part of a morning chugging

across a choppy Channel from Newhaven, immersed in the smell of diesel fumes, frying chips and the occasional pool of vomit, gourmandising was the last thing the weary passenger had in mind as he disembarked in La Belle France. Stena-Sealink, as it was, used to schedule some brave on-shore entertainment – bingo, high-kicking dancing girls complete with ostrich feathers (particularly good fun in force nine seas) and Hammond Organ-players covering the Fine Young Cannibals. "Caught in a Trap..." You sang along with feeling.

Eventually, though, you were more or less forced to partake of ferry food, the result being that the restaurants of Dieppe

got little change out of day trippers from Blighty, which was everybody's loss. Dieppe has some very decent restaurants indeed, brimful of fresh fish and crustaceans. But now P&O Stena – the latest incarnation on this route – has established a fast-ferry service taking just two-and-a-quarter hours. It's revolutionised Dieppe as a day-trip destination.

Unlike Honfleur, which it resembles in size and, in my eyes, in beauty, Dieppe is not really a tourist town at all. It has a busy working harbour and imports large quantities of bananas and shellfish. Only chimps would travel to France for bananas, but the small restaurants bustling along the quai Henri IV are stacked full of platters of fruits

de mer (lobsters, oysters, prawns, whelks, shrimps, cockles and winkles, displayed on a bed of ice and seaweed), not to mention the less ambitious mussels and chips.

Saturday is a perfect day to hop across. Get up at dawn and catch the 6.45am fast ferry which will have you de-camped in the centre of town in time to take advantage of the huge Saturday morning street market. Stalls range from massive displays of cheeses, sausages and fish, down to local farmers with rickety trestle tables holding a few beetroots and eggs and a dead duck.

This is Normandy, so cream and cheeses crop up in the cooking – nowhere more deliciously than in *marmite dieppoise*, the

local fish stew. Just a few miles inland and you are into cider country, so apples and Calvados are also everywhere.

Put your feet up with an aperitif at the Café Tribunal, from where Oscar Wilde was banned during his exile in the town, and contemplate lunch. You'll still have time for a booze shop before the 5pm fast-ferry home.

Dieppe diners

La Melle, 2 Grand Rue du Pollet (00 33 35 84 21 19): despite its Michelin star, this is a friendly restaurant, and it has some exquisite seafood dishes. La Marmite Dieppoise, 8 Rue St Jean (00 33 35 84 24 26), is a well-established favourite with

both Brits and Dieppoises, which means it can be very busy, but, as the name suggests, they make the definitive *marmite dieppoise* here. Nice apple tart, too. Service can be maddeningly slow. An Gran' Duquesne, 15 place St Jacques (00 33 35 84 21 51): I had previously been avoiding this because it looked a bit of a tourist trap, but was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the cooking, the service and the extreme good value. You can eat well for 79F on the set menu.

P&O Stena (0990 930980) is offering a Saturday day-trip fast-ferry fare of £10, or £5 on other days. For a day out in Newhaven see page 6

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GREEN CHANNEL

Marine ecotourism

Coral reefs are among the most diverse ecosystems in the world, and also some of the most endangered. The destruction of these biologically rich areas is attributable, in part, to coastal tourism developments. Ecotourists play an important role in the travel industry through the choices they make, as the US-based Ecotourism Society points out. Below are its guidelines on "how to be a marine ecotourist".

Viewing wildlife

- Never surround a single animal or a group of animals; there should always be an area for animals to move away from you
- Animals always have the right of way; it is their home
- Never touch marine animals
- Keep noise levels to a minimum to avoid unnecessary stress
- Never harass or chase wildlife for the sake of a better look or an "ultimate" photograph
- If you see a marine animal that appears to be in distress or injured, do not attempt to rescue it. Contact the nearest authorities and they will

determine the most suitable course of action

- Do not litter; if you see any litter pick it up. Many forms of litter have devastating effects on natural ecosystems

Recreational boating etiquette

- Make advance navigation plans before departure, and take note of shallow and fragile areas, and the influence of the tide, as low tide can create shallow conditions in otherwise navigable waters
- Stay within marked channels, and be knowledgeable of the different navigation markers
- Safety first! Carry emergency gear, tell people on shore what you are doing and where you are going, and be aware of upcoming weather patterns
- Ideally you should undertake a boating course; this will improve your skills and safety and therefore reduce your impact on the environment
- Use mooring buoys where possible, as improper anchorage can damage the environment
- Keep a covered rubbish bin on board and ensure that people use it. Dispose of your trash at the marina. Reuse, reduce, recycle
- Do not discharge sewage into the water; use

the nearest pump-out facility

- Never discard fishing lines overboard
- Do not drain engine fluids into the water

Snorkelling/scuba diving

- Do not touch living marine wildlife, such as coral and other animals
- Do not collect souvenirs (shells, coral, etc)
- Do not stand or rest on coral reefs
- Never harass aquatic animals for amusement
- Always be aware of your position in the water and that of your dive gear, in relation to marine animals and the coral reef
- Remember to dive safely, in terms of both your own health and that of the marine environment
- Review and update diving skills such as buoyancy control, finning and positioning
- Do not feed marine animals

The Ecotourism Society, PO Box 755, North Bennington, VT 05257, US (tel: 802-447 2121, fax: 802-447-2122, e-mail: ecotourism@ecotourism.org, [Web: www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org))

RED CHANNEL

On 22 April, the US Embassy in Moscow issued the following information through its warden system: "The Embassy has received reports that 'skinhead' groups have assaulted Asian and African students in Moscow."

"At 7pm on 21 April, over 20 'skinheads' severely beat two young Asian women in an alley between the Stary and Novy Arbat. There have also been press reports indicating that the same groups have threatened the lives of Asian and African students."

"The groups are primarily targeting the areas near the dormitories of the Russian University of Peoples Friendship (RUPF) and the Institute of Asian and African Countries (IAAC) of Moscow State University, located near Metro stations Yugo-Zapadnaya and Universitet respectively. However, these attacks can occur anywhere in Moscow. Police have already arrested some members of the groups and have increased their presence in these areas."

"The Embassy urges Americans, particularly students of African and Asian origin, to exercise appropriate caution."

Sue Wheat

5/TRAVEL: FRANCE

French canvas



Camping may call to mind monotonous food and forced jollity, but Barbara Bleiman saw a different picture from a tent in the Auvergne

Every year it's been up there on our list of possible holiday options. Every year we've found some excuse to avoid it - children too young, too much of an investment in equipment, too much noise, too many other people, too little of the pampering we feel we've earned.

Last year, for some crazy reason, we decided to go for it. Well, perhaps "go for it" is putting it a bit strongly. Serious camping would have meant committing ourselves for the whole two weeks, buying a giant frame tent with an awning, a two-ring gas cooker, a little fridge, camp beds, electric lighting and a trailer to put it all into. Our version of going for it involved one trip to a camping shop to buy a big dome tent and two extra sleeping bags, and a quick rummage around the cellar to find the ancient gas camping stove that we took hitching round Greece 25 years ago. We couldn't quite bring ourselves to risk everything so we planned it as a little experiment: just three nights, sandwiched between stopovers with friends and bookings in hotels in France.

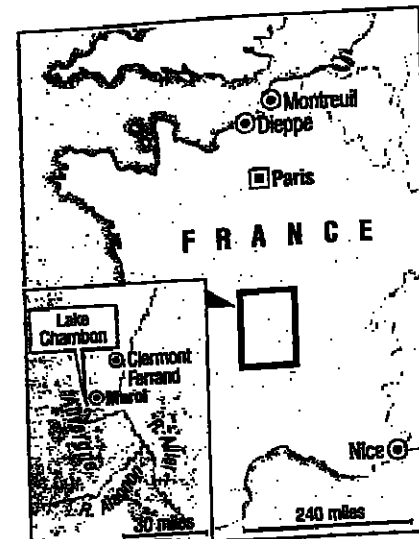
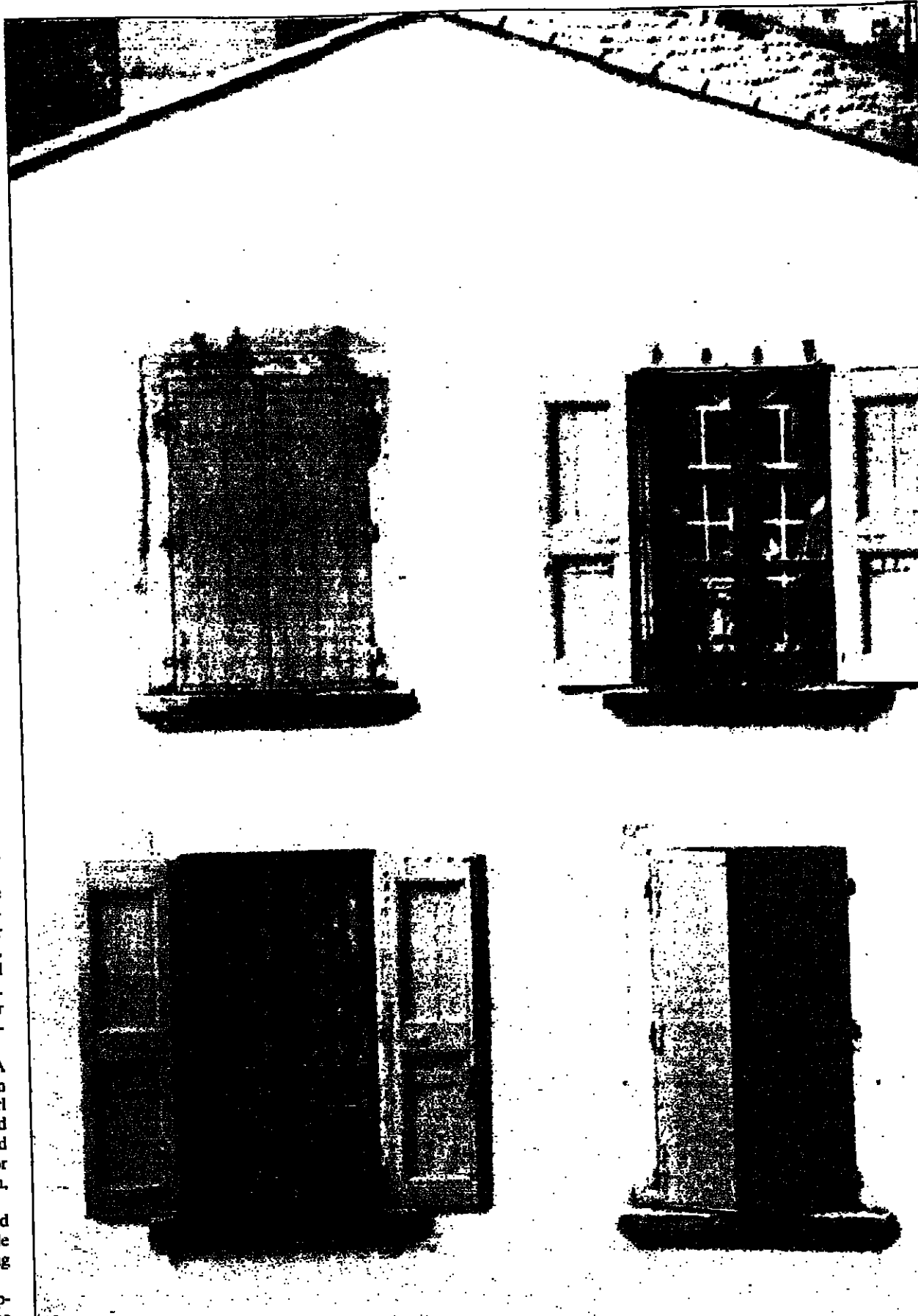
The children, now eight and 11, were full of optimism. Even an abortive trial night in the garden did not dampen their spirits - 10 minutes of rain and a clap of thunder had been enough to bring them back inside. Sitting in our friend's cosy, watertight house near Montreuil on the last night of our stopover and watching blankets of rain shooting down off the roof, I knew why we hadn't ever chosen a camping holiday before. Yet as we set off next morning, heading south towards the Auvergne, the storm clouds cleared and thoughts of fresh air and the great outdoors banished the gloom.

We had booked into a four-star site in Murat, a village near the lake of Chambon. It is a stunningly beautiful area, with plate-glass lakes, soaring mountains and swaths of green meadows.

On the campsite we were greeted with great *gentillesse*. A pathetically poorly phrased request for a quiet *emplacement* with *beaucoup d'ombre* resulted in us being guided by a friendly girl on a bicycle to a peaceful spot on the edge of a field, surrounded by trees. Our neighbours were two Dutch families. We later found that the campsites of France were refugee camps seemingly for the whole Dutch population, each with identical blond children, magnificent canvas palace and gleaming new car.

As darkness fell on our first night, we zipped ourselves in and lay listening jealously to our Dutch neighbours sitting at their de luxe plastic table, with their lanterns and electric lights, chatting contentedly just two or three feet away.

By 11.30pm we were unzipping our sleeping bags and stomping off to remind them of the camp's night-time silence rule, ruling the day we ever thought of camping. At 6am the clattering and



Auvergne adventures: life under canvas (far left) can be just as appealing as the choice of more conventional accommodation. Main photograph: Olivier Luc/Frank Spooner Pictures

clanking from the next-door tent had us in a frenzy of fury, but on poking my head out of the tent I found them climbing into their packed car and heading off towards Holland. I waved them off with a huge smile. Thereafter, we were staggered by the effectiveness of the silence rule, and had it not been for bumpy ground and old bones I would have slept soundly each night.

Campsites are a bizarre mixture of prison camp, theme park and grunge festival. You and all your possessions are alternately dusty and dirty, muddy and dirty or just plain dirty. Queues for toilets and showers never seem to be a problem for men, but women are up at the crack of dawn to avoid them and still find bleary-eyed fellow avoiders, in their nighties and cardies, clutching a roll of toilet paper and hoping that the cleaning squad have got there before them.

Food on a single gas ring is not up to our usual Michelin two-star standards - a tin of pork cassoulet on the first night, a tin of duck cassoulet on the second night and, for a real treat, a tin of goose cassoulet on the third night. But the take-away food counter at the camp grocery provides you with chicken and chips, so long as you bring your own container. We got wise on the second day, when we realised that one portion of chips was equal to whatever container you provided.

Of course there were many more facilities: the swimming pool, to leap into, the organised games of pétanque, the drawing competition and fun run, the tennis and ping-pong, all of which had the children and partner racing off for more fun while I could sit quietly reading E Annie Proulx by the tent, soaking up the sunshine (but not too much, because our shaded *emplacement* has taken care of that). It was a real longed-for, doing-absolutely-nothing-not-even-visiting-that-castle-on-the-hill-style rest. And so it came as little surprise to us when, later in the holiday, sitting in a mediocre hotel next to a busy road in a bustling lakeside resort in the Alps, we all agreed that we'd rather be under canvas and decided to check out a campsite, preferring the queues for toilets, the dirty clothes, the monotonous meals and the organised fun to the anodyne pleasures of our usual holidays.

This year we're upgrading a bit; we may risk a whole week, and we'll certainly be taking a larger pot for those chips.

For more information on camping in France, contact the French Travel Centre, 178 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AL (0891 244123, a premium-rate number). If you prefer not to get involved with putting up the tent, plenty of British tour operators offer holidays at sites with pre-erected tents in France and beyond.

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All quiet on the Western Front

From bombs to barracks, the Victorian coastal bastion of Newhaven Fort has a surprising appeal for children, as Andrew Hasson found out

In a warren of dark tunnels dug into the cliffs underneath Newhaven Fort, Daniel, only 18 months old, shouted and laughed at his own echo, delighted with this new form of magic. On the other hand, 12-year-old Nikita found it "spooky down there. It must have been a very scary place to be in the war."

We emerged from the gloom of the tunnels, and climbed up to the gun emplacements on the cliff-top, guarding the entrance to the harbour. Here we stood on the edge of the Sussex coast, where the threat of assault felt all too real during the two world wars.

Newhaven Fort, finished in 1871 as part of a vast coastal defence programme, was useful during the 1914-1918 war, when this Sussex harbour became the main military supply port for the Western Front. It was well defended, but the attack for which it was so well prepared never materialised.

During the Second World War, the Luftwaffe tried, and failed, to do any lasting damage - and the 10-acre site now aims to tell the story of this conflict, and its effect on the ordinary people of the area. This it does successfully - and, of course, in beautiful surroundings. The fort has been run for the last decade by Lewes District Council, which has just spent £200,000 upgrading the scheduled ancient monument.

Among the thousands of ferry passengers now passing annually through the port en route to Dieppe (see Gerard Gilbert's story, page 4), there can't be many who are aware of this Victorian coastal fortress. Yet the ferry itself passes within yards of the ramparts. A few of those passengers may be aware that Lord Lucan's abandoned car was found just down the road, shortly after his famous disappearance. (It is widely believed that he took the ferry himself, but I doubt whether he had time for a visit to Newhaven Fort.)

For me, the charm of the place lies in its irregularity. Instead of the site being levelled and a regularly-shaped fort built on top, like the 70 or so constructed around the coast at the same time, this one was built into the terrain. Spread out below are the barracks. This terrace of brick buildings, built direct into the cliff, have today mostly been converted into display rooms. Inside the arched rooms, the excellent real-life sets have, among others, depictions of a blitzed house, the Home Guard and evacuees.

The Royal Observer Corps established a post at the fort in 1929 and, throughout the war that followed a decade later, visually monitored aircraft movements from all over the country. Two of the old barrack rooms tell the story of the corps; a wartime observation post and operations room have been reconstructed. There

are plenty of hands-on activities: guessing wartime rations and prices, displays with buttons that light up parts of a model battlefield, and a quiz trail for children to follow. There is also an excellent play area for younger family members.

The visitors

Andrew Hasson took two of his sons, Harry, aged 11, and Daniel, aged 18 months, and a friend, Nikita Beahan, aged 12.

Harry: There were little model sets showing battles, and all the tanks and guns and stuff were set exactly as they had been. It was as if time had been rewound. The best bit was the bombed-out house, but it was fun climbing on the guns, too. The play area was good, because it makes children feel like being on an assault course. There's climbing stuff, swinging things and chains. The canteen had a really nice smell of coffee and the food was yummy. What they sold in the gift-shop was relevant: model planes and tanks and gas-mask holders.

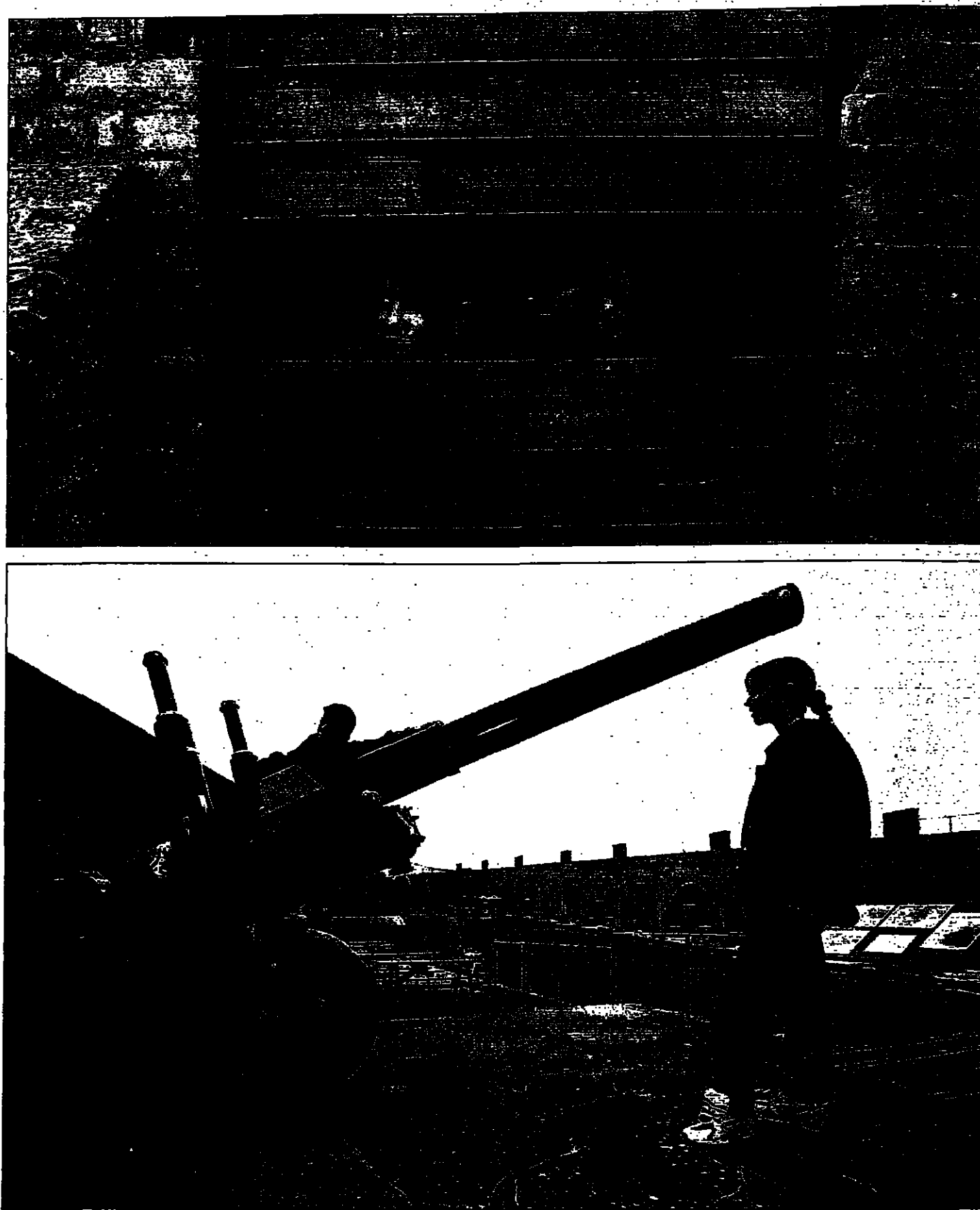
Nikita: I was here last year on a school trip, and they've really improved it since then. The bombed-out house was realistic. There was lots of information. It was as if the model sets were actually talking to you. The atmosphere made you feel as if you were in the Forties, which is a good thing, but it was quite scary. It made me wonder how I would have coped and how I would have felt.

On top, the sea view is really nice. You can see down over all the boats in Newhaven harbour. You can also see all the fields over towards Lewes and down the coast to Seaford. The fresh air was brilliant. Even teenagers would like it. I love it.

The deal

Getting there: The fort (01273 517622) is signposted on all approach roads to Newhaven, which lies between Brighton and Eastbourne, on the A259 coast road. It is linked to Lewes and the A27 via the A26. There are regular trains to Newhaven Town from London Victoria, and from Brighton 12 miles to the west. Open daily from 10.30am-6pm (last entry 5pm) until 1 November.

Admission: adults £3.60, children (four to 15) £1.95, family ticket (two adults and up to three children) £10.50, senior citizens £2.95, children under four free. **Facilities:** some areas are difficult for visitors who are not fully mobile, although most of the displays are accessible with care.



'It was as if time had been rewound': Harry Hasson and Nikita Beahan at Newhaven Fort

Photograph: Andrew Hasson

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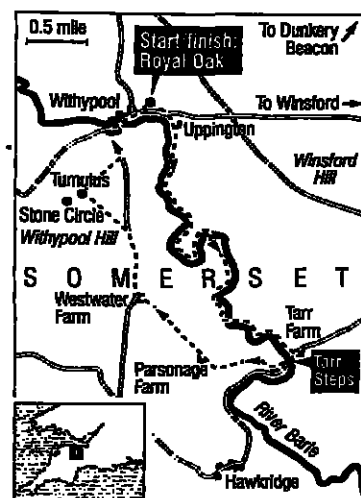
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Fiction and fact: legend attributes Tarr Steps to giants, but the likelihood is that they are a medieval construction
Photograph: Robert Harding
Picture Library



A river runs through it

Weekend walk:
Jonathan Stebbings
treks downstream to
the heart of Exmoor

This seven-mile walk follows part of the Two Moors Way in the heart of Exmoor. It has two distinct halves: initially following the river Bank through the sheltering beech woods and meadows that line its banks from Withypool to Tarr Steps - then up to Withypool Hill, to be exposed to the bracing winds and views of the great moor. The walk offers a hearty eleven miles or tea half-way round at Tarr Steps, and finishes with a pint of Exmoor Ale and lunch or dinner at the 17th-century Royal Oak pub in Withypool, so it makes an ideal morning or afternoon stroll.

Start at the Royal Oak in Withypool, leaving the village on the Winsford road to the east; 500 yards up the hill, climb the stile on the right. The path winds through Uppington Plantation,

below Uppington House, leading you gradually down to the river. About half a mile downstream you pass the stepping-stones across the river to South Hill. The river here is shallow, and much of the year rocks or tree trunks break the surface, creating the bubble-filled eddies that make perfect hunting-grounds for dippers. These dapper little birds, sober-suited wrens with white breasts, flit low along the river as you drive them downstream. Keep an eye on the branches above the water for kingfishers.

The wood eventually opens into a flat area of meadow, with Bradley Hams rising steeply behind. On the opposite side, Hayes Wood looms above, the tree tops bearing the great nests of a large heronry. During the nesting season the herons flutter on the breeze carrying building materials or food with the grace of a second-row forward playing hopscotch. As both banks become clear of trees, a ford and a bridge cross the river to Batsford Farm. Continue on the east bank.

From this point the river

meanders more erratically, the sides of the valley get steeper and the woods close in. The path is easy to follow, allowing you to relax among the shadows and birdsong. The river becomes more voluble as its speed increases with the gradient. Badger and red deer roam the woods, which are full of bluebells at this time of year.

Four miles downstream from Withypool, the river widens and

a troll to match its scale - it is 180ft, including the surface stones on the west side.

Tarr Steps have been the victim of legends attributing them to giants and the devil - you immediately imagine they are of an age with Stonehenge and Avebury, but the likelihood is that they are a medieval construction to allow drovers to get across the river without their

Sustenance can be found on the east side, at the 16th-century Tarr Farm, which serves wholesome cakes, cream teas and full meals, either in its warm, timbered interior or in the garden, which looks down to the steps and up the hill to a couple of large and frisky black stallions.

The return leg begins by crossing the river and continuing along the Hawkridge road for 50 yards, before taking the lane up the hill and the Tarr Steps Hotel. The lane becomes quite steep, passing the hotel on the left, and is bound by high, moss-covered banks. After 300 yards the lane turns sharply to the right, and then peters out at the junction of some worn-out hedges high above the valley.

Follow the hedge line due east across fields for half a mile, away from the river. You will pass the brow of the hill on your right as the slope takes you down towards Parsonage Farm. Before the farm gate, follow the footpath sign to the right; this will take you round the north edge of Parsonage Down to Westwater Farm a mile away. At Westwater you join the

lane from Hawkridge to Withypool. The walk home is one-and-a-half miles, with the river threading its way through the woods down to the right and the moor rising to the left. It is worth leaving the road to climb to the top of Withypool Hill. There is a small tumulus at the top and a stone circle 200 yards to the south west. At 398 metres, the hill offers fine views over the moor, especially Winsford Hill two-and-a-half miles to the east, and Dunkery Beacon five-and-a-half miles to the north east, at 519 metres the highest point on Exmoor. On entering Withypool you go over a cattle grid and cross the river again over a delightful, six-arched bridge. The road leads up through the village to the Royal Oak.

Length: seven miles of generally easy walking, with one steep ascent. Time taken: one-and-a-half hours to Tarr Steps and one-and-a-half hours back at a leisurely pace. Ordnance Survey maps: Landranger 181, Outdoor Leisure 9. Royal Oak, Withypool 01643 831506. Tarr Farm, Tarr Steps 01643 851507.

What, when, where ...

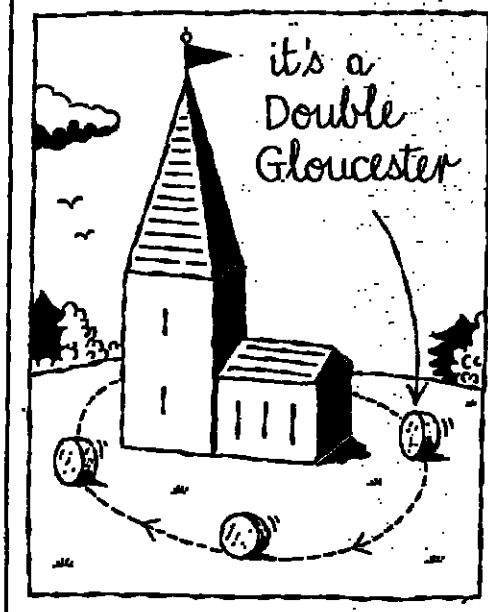
If you're in Randwick, Gloucestershire, on Sunday, don't be surprised to see three Double Gloucester cheeses hurtling round the church - it's just the beginning of the Wap.

These celebrations begin on the first Sunday in May, when three cheeses, carried on a litter and decorated with flowers, are brought to the church to be blessed by the vicar. After the service, the cheeses are rolled anti-clockwise three times around the church building. The ceremony is thought to be about 600 years old.

The following Saturday is Wap Day, when Mop Man, Flag Man and the Swordbearer accompany the Mayor to a pool where he is ritually ducked. Afterwards the Wap queen and the Mayor do some more cheese-rolling with the Double Gloucester to mark the opening of the Wap Fair. (Be careful if you're standing at the bottom of the slope, at Well Leaze.) There are stalls, music and other entertainments, and you can also taste some of the rolled cheese - a little bruised perhaps.

The blessing of the cheeses takes place at 10.30 on Sunday 3 May at St John the Baptist Church, Randwick, Gloucestershire. Cheese-rolling is at 11.15am. Wap Day is on Saturday, 9 May.

Sally Kindberg



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The moral high ground



On the Inca trail: the extensive ruins of Machu Picchu, perched at nearly 9,000ft

Photograph: Pictures Colour Library

There was a moment, as I scrambled upwards through the Andes, when I thought I might die. Dead Woman's Pass lay ahead. Nothing could have been more aptly named.

Clambering almost vertically, with a wall of mountain before my eyes, I found the air growing thinner and breathing ever more difficult. Above, the piercing blue sky seemed to extract the oxygen from the mountains beneath. Even the fleet-footed porters looked anxiously over-stretched as they ran past. Conrad, a member of our party, had fallen into step alongside me. As if on some superhuman mission, we calculated every movement forward, 10 or 15 steps and then a pause.

"Please don't think you have to wait for me," I wheezed, my asthma for the first time a problem in our hike towards Machu Picchu, the legendary site of the Incas. "Don't worry," he said, in short snatches of reply. "You may notice ... that I have to pause ... as frequently as you do."

Our climb upwards had not been too tough at first. The worst of altitude sickness was past; our party had already spent a fortnight acclimatising as we travelled Peru in a giant truck. And the first day of

our 24-mile walk had been a moderate affair, to get us into the swing. Cactus vied with snow-topped mountains in the most spectacular of scenic views. Below us, as we walked one behind the other through the lower stretches of the Andes, a turquoise river flounced through the valley floor, tumbling round the boulders.

Our first night in tents, erected for us by our porters, had been cold – though not the coldest we endured. Not like the night at Chivay earlier in the holiday, where the water froze in our water bottles and the tents were stiff with ice by morning. At Chivay, even a sleeping-bag designed for temperatures down to minus 10 seemed little more protection than a sheet. And the truck refused to start next morning. Early winter in Peru makes for clear, warm, sunny days, but bitter nights.

Here on the Inca trail, life seemed less demanding at first. But after our easy introduction, this, the second day of climbing upwards, was much much tougher. We set off all together, but the steepness of the journey, up through woods, mountain pastures and on to Dead Woman's Pass at nearly 14,000ft, soon separated us.

No one enjoys the thought that their holiday has damaged an environment. Louise Jury writes of a 'clean, green' trip to Peru – while Chris Walmsley admits that his own visit revealed the malign influence of tourism

Mark and Liz, our truck-driving tour leaders, leapt on ahead. Monica and Abigail close behind them, but, finding it tough, the rest of us straggled onwards at whatever pace we found tolerable.

Reaching the top, I staggered to the edge, refusing to join the first arrivals sitting waiting until I knew I had no farther to climb. The sight was astounding: miles of steep mountains, verdant with rainforest with all the appearance of a virgin land from a past age. Conrad and I posed for congratulatory photographs. There was a real sense of achievement. Eventually, all safely reunited, we descended to where the porters had prepared lunch.

Sitting at our picnic tables on tiny, collapsible picnic stools, in our stout walking boots, we must have resembled one of the

more eccentric English dining societies. In three-and-a-half days climbing through the Andes we had some spectacular meal-times, but possibly nothing as astounding as the panorama below the pass.

Our journey continued up and down original stone steps, some knee-height in depth, where the Inca messengers once ran from the distant city of Cuzco. By the fourth morning, we were nearly at Machupicchu. Rising in pitch blackness at 4am, we dressed, clumsy in the confines of our tents, and set out by torchlight. As the first, grey-pink streaks of dawn illuminated our progress, we arrived at the Sun Gate and the vast city lay below us.

Known only to the local Peruvians for three centuries, Machu Picchu was revealed to the West in 1911 by an American archaeologist, Hiram Bingham, who

was looking for the lost city of the Incas. The 15th- and 16th-century ruins of temples and palaces, threatened last year by forest fires which made the site impassable for some weeks, are a United Nations heritage site perched at nearly 9,000ft.

For all our party, a mixed bag of mainly professionals in our thirties, with a young Oxford graduate and a retired chemical engineer at either end of the age spectrum. Machu Picchu was the highlight.

Over three weeks, we had explored the coast and the desert before travelling to the high inland plains. Sometimes we camped and cooked for ourselves with food from local markets; then, just when we thought we could not take another freezing night, a hotel would provide a touch of luxury.

At Nazca we had hired tiny four-seater planes to fly us over the mysterious lines, shapes of birds and creatures inscribed across the desert centuries before when flight was unknown, yet almost impossible to see at ground level. In the Colca Canyon, Peru's answer to the Grand, condors had soared above us. On Lake Titicaca we sailed in silence on boats of reed.

Yet the walk to Machu Picchu triumphed because it made us feel like explorers. In recent years, visitors had made the trail filthy with waste, but the route has been cleaned up and our tour leaders rigorously enforced the no-litter rule, so all around was only nature. The site is out of bounds to coach parties, because there is no road and you can arrive only on foot or by train.

Ours was an affable group of people, large enough to dilute the irritations that emerge in any organised group, small enough to maintain the sense of adventure. We had already formed friendships while jolting our way through Peru by truck. Nearly all of us walked the Inca trail. It was the kind of experience you call "bonding".

Louise Jury travelled with Exodus, 9 Weir Road, London SW12 0LT (0181-673 5550). She paid £1,460, which included travel and accommodation for three weeks.

For independent travellers, there are plenty of bargain air fares to Peru at present. For example, Iberia (0171-530 0011) is offering a fare of £533.50 from London or Manchester to Lima.

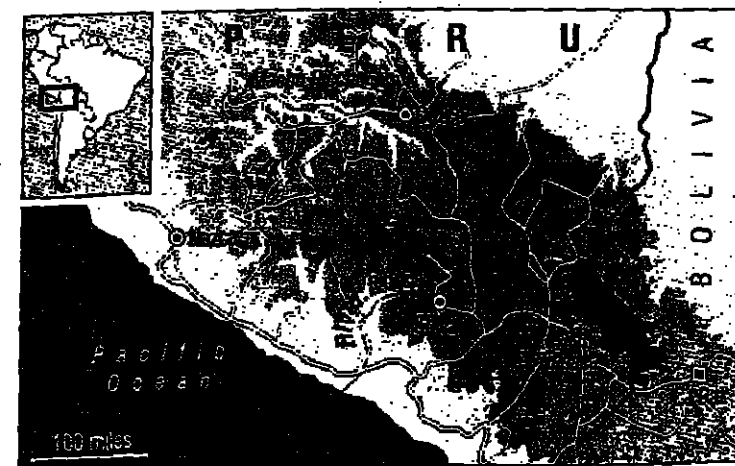
NOT MAGICAL, NOT MYSTICAL, JUST A MISERY TOUR

I met a traveller in a London pub who had been to Central America and India, and was planning to tour Cambodia. He took a dim view of sanitised package holidays and organised tours to far-flung places, and a similarly dim view of people who go on them. We argued, and at the end of the evening he punched me several times in the head and stormed out of the pub.

I believe that people go on different holidays for different reasons, and they are entitled to do what makes them happiest. After all, that is what being on holiday is meant to be about. But I found myself in a dilemma on returning from an organised tour of Peru. As an independent traveller you choose your company and where you go, and you take pleasure in resolving the numerous daily mysteries and hitches that confront you. When you are part of a tightly planned tour, you cannot choose your companions and you find that someone else has already been paid to resolve all those daily mysteries and hitches on your behalf. And even if you are open-minded you find that you have prejudices after all, though not so strong that you are driven to beating a stranger into the ground.

Our tour was run like a military campaign from start to finish. There were briefings and debriefings,

dressings-up and dressings-down, and tardiness was a punishable offence. The leader had a curious way of barking instructions and ignoring group members' attempts to talk to him. He could not conceal his contempt for the locals, whom he described as savages. And his dislike for the people he was leading



became apparent when he announced that he would gladly exchange two of the party for a "charming couple from Weybridge" whom he'd met along the Inca Trail.

Rumours spread like the wings of hungry condors. One female member of the party alleged that the leader had propositioned her in her hotel

room on the first night. The following morning he was purported to say that complaining would be useless because "we are all old boys together back in England". A young Cusqueñan guide, stumbling miserably over her words, said the leader had told her that her mother was uglier than a mummy in the Gold

Museum in Lima. The lowest point of the tour, and perhaps the defining moment, was a visit to the Yagua Indians' village on the banks of the Yanacuna river. With advance warning of our arrival, they had dusted off their traditional costumes and strung out a motley collection of factory-produced tourist artefacts on

So perhaps you can appreciate my dilemma. There I was, clinging on to the moral high ground in a pub in central London, only to find that I am an embittered old hypocrite after all. I think I'll go to Antarctica on a shoestring next year and really punish myself.

Chris Walmsley

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A grotto brings Gothic fantasy to a garden. Kirsty Fergusson investigates the watery charm of the artificial cavern

I imagine I'm not the only person who has looked out at a waterlogged garden through rain-spattered windows over the past few weeks, finding consolation only in grimly ironic thoughts about "the new Mediterranean climate". But there are more positive ways of reacting - and getting stuck into a big project in the garden is one of the best. Particularly if it involves a bit of eccentric fun, hints optimistically at the need for a cool and shady retreat and calls for shell- or fossil-hunting expeditions.

You've done Project Pergola, Project Pool, Project Gazebo; but this is no time for retirement, as the best is yet to come: Project Grotto. (And "grotto" is such a nice word to roll around your mouth that half the pleasure of making one must come from being able to give frequent exercise to the word in conversation.)

The first grottoes were found rather than made: caverns adjacent to or containing a sacred spring, where nymphs and muses resided and sibyls offered their consultancy services. But the ancients were enthusiastic builders of artificial grottoes and fountains in their gardens, too, although tastes were divided between the rustic look (lumpy tufa, shells and coral) and the architectural look (hewn stone, vaults and mosaics). This division seems to have permeated all the great eras and centres of grotto-building - Renaissance Italy, Baroque France, Rococo Germany, and England, where the grotto flourished as both a neo-classical and a Victorian Gothic phenomenon. But it's not a terribly important division; whichever taste you adhered to, the decoration was to be as fantastic as your purse would allow.

"It is a place capable of giving you so much pleasure and delight," wrote John Woolridge in 1677, "that you may bestow not undeservedly what cost you please on it." There were indeed a number of no-expense-spared grottoes produced around that time, in which the spiritual dimension became slightly submerged by all the extravagant artistry. Or, taking off on another kind of tangent, Pope's grotto in his garden at Twickenham ended up as a kind of mineral museum, with rare stalactites and chunks of the Giants Causeway lining the walls.

Perhaps these should be read as cautionary tales, because grottomania is on the brink of making a comeback. Possibly it's because the message has got through that gardens are for fun, for experiment and imagination, in terms of both the plants and the architecture they support. The fabulous new grotto that opened in 1987 at Leeds Castle, in Kent, started the ball rolling. The entrance is at the centre of a maze and the subterranean chamber leads you back to the outside of it, a clever conceit. And I keep hearing of gardens in private ownership where grottoes are under consideration or even construction. The funny thing is that people are often quite coy about



Eccentric fun: entrance to the 16th-century grotto, Bomarzo, Lazio in Italy (above); Margaret Morgan-Grenville and her Dorset creation (left) Photographs: Garden Picture Library/John Lawrence

Silent stream

wanting to have a grotto; inevitably, I've heard it said that a grotto marks you down as an extravagant eccentric, and the associations with spiritual mystery still cling from the earliest days.

I'm not so sure; it would take only the tiniest bit of spin-doctoring to present the grotto as a cool (in both senses of the word) adjunct to the New Garden. Take Candace Dahouth's work, for example.

Dahouth is an American designer, whose mosses and needlepoint tapestries have won her great acclaim. She is currently engaged on the interior decoration of a newly completed architectural grotto for a private client. The construction is hexagonal, focusing on a mirrored basin into which flows water from surrounding temples. The vaulted ceiling is medieval blue, decorated with gold stars and clusters of shells at the base of the ribs. Fragments of mirror have been fitted amongst the pebbles and shells (her clients have amassed thousands from all over the world in the past 10 years) which cover the

walls in an abstract, textural pattern; the floor is made from artificial black ammonites. Candace Dahouth has spent the best part of a year working on this extraordinary project, which is now nearing completion. By candlelight, the tiny shards of mirror in the encrusted interior should make for a Baroque experience for which even Coleridge might have struggled to find words.

You could see that the two farmers standing on

the opposite bank of the river that forms the boundary of Margaret Morgan-Grenville's garden were struggling to find the right words to describe what, in its undecorated condition, resembled a pedimented sentry-box, constructed from breeze blocks, fitted snugly into the bank on her side of the river. "We've been wondering what you're building there," one of them finally hazarded across the water, "and we've come to the conclusion that it's a fishing-hut."

Margaret, a self-confessed grotto-lover, decided to build her own as an alternative to writing a book about them. She had started to research the subject when the idea came to her that it would be "much more fun" to build one and decorate it herself, than to write about other people's grottoes.

Her grotto faces west and has been placed to make the most of the evening sun, rather than to provide a shady retreat. The fossils with which she is covering the walls have come from local beaches (Lyne Regis is a short drive away) and piles of broken and whole ammonites and belemnites are being transformed into a crusty mosaic. All that it lacks at present is a motto, to be woven into the pattern. Any thoughts?

Candace Dahouth, *Ebenezer, Pilton, Somerset BA4 4BR* (01749 890 433)

Anna Pavord returns next week

WEEKEND WORK

Plant or transplant lily of the valley: the leaves may turn brown within a week, but they will produce the goods next year.

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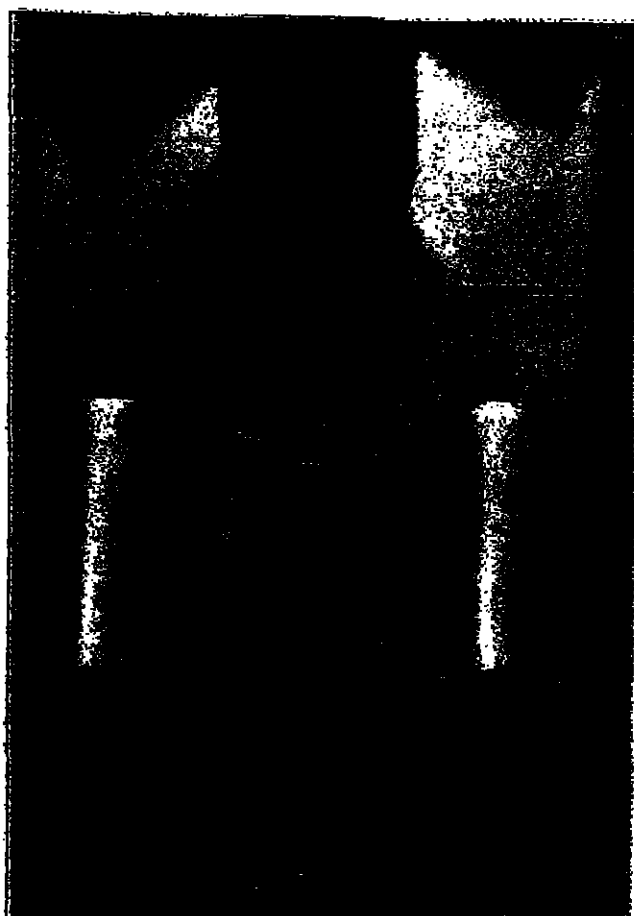
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A vicarious voyage around the world

The stuff of ... exotica. Sally Staples travels the globe in a small London shop

For those who cannot afford to employ the interior designer David Champion to create a new look for their homes, a trip to his small but perfectly styled shop in West London is an inspiration for ideas. Every available nook and cranny is crammed with treasures and designed to gratify the eye. Here the emphasis is on visual pleasure rather than practicality.

Juxtaposition, according to David Champion, is the key to good taste. His aim is to create a calming environment by balancing different textures to create an aesthetic effect. Bamboo lamp-bases jostle with Burmese rice-carriers; a French bridge chair in fake elephant-skin sets off a South African township picture frame. Here is a reproduction Chinese screen in glitzy Viennese style, with a

£2,350 price tag; there is a pair of carved wooden Ethiopian chairs (£1,100 each). Incense sticks poke out of tall, elegant Vietnamese ceramic holders, and on the floor stands a Mexican sweet-mould made of wood, converted into a candle-holder.

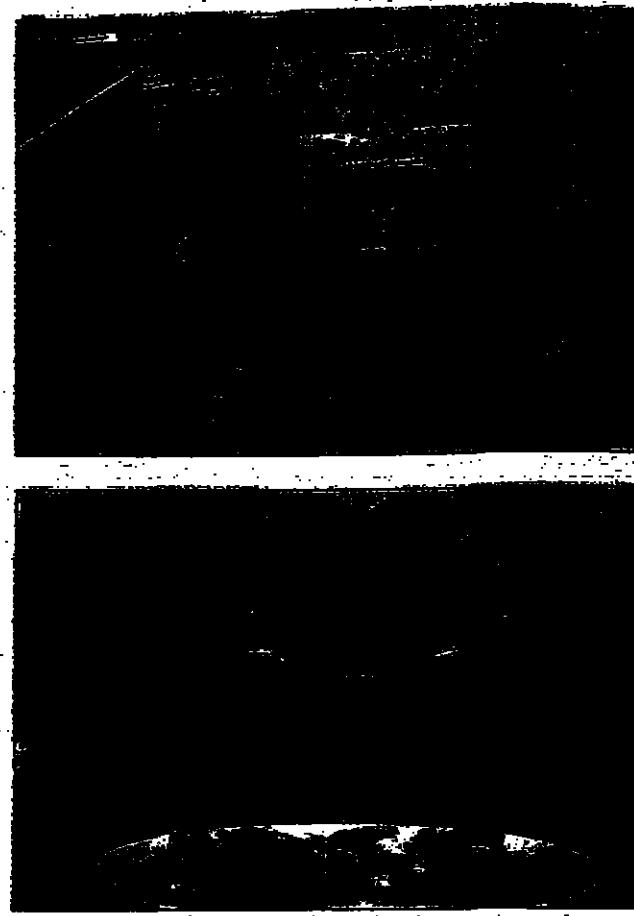
One wall is hung with a range of Moroccan mirrors made from bone and silver. Some designs are uniquely Champion, such as a pair of lined-oak lamp-bases turned by a specially commissioned craftsman in Norfolk. For the £780 each that they cost, you would not expect to find anything similar elsewhere.

It is a classy shop, to which clients return again and again to browse. There are no overbearing staff to bother you — merely a quiet welcome. And after half

an hour of wistful dreaming over the more expensive items, you find some consolation corners.

Downstairs, large ceramic bowls are filled with brightly lacquered Vietnamese pebbles in a range of colours, from £7.50 each. There are Indian saris and throws, Lebanese cushions, and bars of olive-oil-and-laurel soap for just £1.80. Or how about a hand-painted chapatti-roller for £11.50? And certainly, decorative Mexican and tin obelisks, Ethiopian horn goblets and Vietnamese crackle rice bowls are features that will enhance a dull or faded background and bring new life into a tired old room.

David Champion, 199 Westbourne Grove, London W11 2SB (0171-727 6016)



More and more people are soothing themselves with the lathe, the gouge, the mallet and the rasp after a stressful day's work. Sally Staples joins the party

When Adam Ritchie began giving classes in wood-carving, he specialised in teaching people how to make decoy ducks. All varieties were carved by his pupils, who became experts on the finer points of the mallard and the pintail. But Adam realised, with growing fascination, that if he gave 12 students exactly the same pattern to copy they would all produce completely individual ducks. However new to the craft, they would each put something of themselves into the finished product.

"Now I like to keep the classes less structured," he says, "and pupils are encouraged to have a go at what they feel they want to carve. I'm not really keen on carving English roses, but if someone wants to carve them, of course I'll help. I try not to direct people too much. I will tell them the most efficient and quickest way to achieve an effect, and I never make them do anything that isn't necessary."

Beginners, however, often choose to start with a duck that is carved from two separate pieces followed out to form the body, with a third piece to make the head. Students at Adam's current evening

class have progressed to tropical fish, long dishes, African heads and, in one case, a kitchen cupboard. Adam teaches at the Kensington and Chelsea College and his pupils — several of whom are teachers themselves — are mostly people who come to unwind for the three-hour evening session after a busy day's work. He provides all the tools, so there is no need to buy anything before joining a class.

He has dozens of different-sized gouges, mallets, clamps and alarming-looking instruments called rasps. These are rather like lethal cheese graters and if you mistake your knuckles for the wood — well, the squeamish would be advised to look away. However, as Adam explains, the craft is perfectly safe if you abide by the rules — namely that fingers should always be kept behind the blade and away from the direction the gouge or rasp is working.

One young enthusiast embarking on his second 10-week course at the college is Richard Thomas. He was working on a tropical fish the day I visited. "I'd never tried wood-carving before," he said. "When I was at school woodwork seemed rather boring, because everything had to be measured — and you had to make what you were told."

"The joy of this course is that you are totally free to work as you want. You become so involved with what you are doing that the conscious mind is completely switched off. Whatever you were worried about when you arrived is forgotten once you get down to work. And what you produce gives you real pride and pleasure."

Denise O'Riley, a ceramics and clay teacher, was working on a long wooden dish to hold party nibbles. She was enjoying making something practical, and

said that the pleasure of wood-carving is that it involves your hands and your head. "I really enjoy working with wood, but the mistakes are harder to cover up than when you work with clay."

Carmel Henry had spent the evening working an enormous lathe, rounding off the edges of a block of wood until they were smooth and even. After that she planned to make a pair of salad servers.

Christina Klassen had designed and made an ambitious kitchen cupboard, complete with shelves, a table flap and a carving of a cat. She had spent a total of 30 hours on the piece, and hoped it would be finished after another six.

Meanwhile, Cliff Pearcey, who works as an education media resources officer, was carving a seagull in relief against a sea background. One of Adam's long-standing pupils, he was using Canadian

Douglas fir. His work is so professional that he holds exhibitions and sells much of his work.

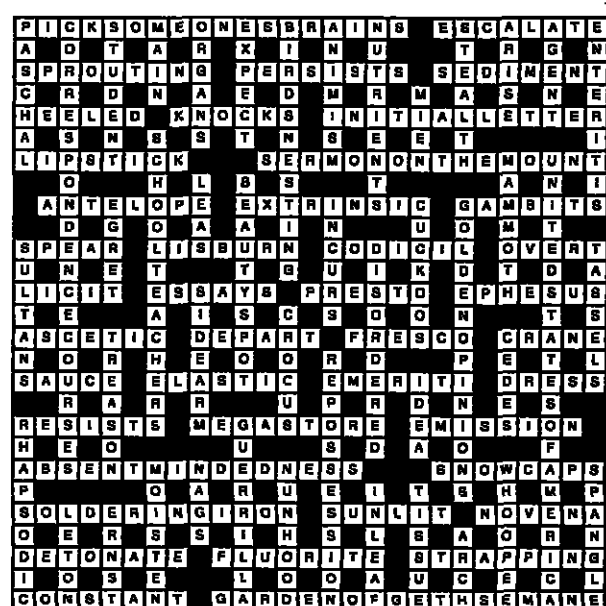
Some pupils like to use sweet-smelling cedar wood to carve ashtrays and dishes. Joan Smith, a teacher, was experimenting with mulberry wood and was carving a bowl shape out of a log, leaving half of the piece in its natural, rough-hewn state.

The four beginners on the course were each given a small duck, roughly cut from a large piece of wood, so they could begin to learn how to gouge the wood, rasp it and smooth the surface. Adam made his way round the class offering a word of advice here and there. Pupils can use the wood available in the college workshop or buy bits and pieces from Adam, who managed to stockpile some choice pieces after the great storm of 1987 felled so many trees.

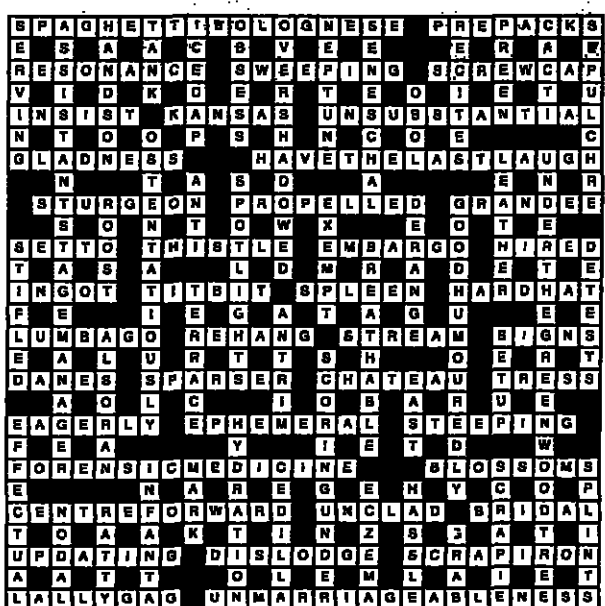
Adam Ritchie also runs classes in furniture design at the Kensington and Chelsea College (0171-573 5333). His decorative wood course, 10 sessions of three hours each, costs £59-£71. Details of other wood-carving classes from local education authorities.

GAMES AND JUMBO CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



CONCISE CROSSWORD



Cryptic Jumbo winner:
D. Whatmore
(Cheltenham)

Runners-up:
I Moore (Largs);
L Turk (Salisbury);
I Whitmore (Essex);
W Salaman (Nantwich);
E Carchae
(Christchurch).

Concise Jumbo winner:
C Newman (Felliscliffe).

Runners-up:
P Lloyd Jones (Saltash);
A Poole (Wadebridge);
S Higginbottom
(Newport);
N Smith (Lindfield);
B Nolan (West
Barnorought).

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Patrick Reyntiens OBE, 72, stained glass artist, raconteur and writer

I played rugby at Ampleforth, and I was regimental low hurdles champion in the Scots Guards just after the war. Low hurdles are the ones where you take five steps between each hurdle and then jump over. High hurdles are much more difficult. I started jumping low hurdles out of sheer boredom, but it was all very amateur. You see, there was nothing to do in Trieste in 1947.

We were guarding the Yugoslav border, so the regiment took over Trieste athletic stadium, which was pretty cool of them. The last Archbishop of Canterbury was there — Robert Runcie. He was a captain and I was a lieutenant. He didn't try hurdling, mind you. I suppose he didn't have the right-shaped legs.

I had one brother and one sister, but I didn't play with either of them very much as a child. I wasn't lonely in the least, because I had a lot of lovely things to do. I played with bricks for one thing. Nobody now remembers clay bricks. Being strictly modular, they built really good,

solid buildings and were made by a firm called Lotts. They only made two things: building bricks and chemistry sets, with which you could make marvellous nasty stiffs. But in the end, Lotts went out of business.

Arthur Mee was the first really subversive character I met in print. He edited a thing called *The Children's Newspaper* which I was given every fortnight by my nanny. It was slightly progressive, and went bust in about 1942, but it was really not bad. It gave you lectures on evolution and things like that.

The funny thing was that Arthur Mee himself looked like a monkey, and he was an enormous egotist, possibly as a result of his name. I liked Mee.

Patrick Reyntiens wrote *The Beauty of Stained Glass* (ISBN 0-295-97559-8). He is co-designer of the windows in Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral, through which, on a clear day, you cannot see his work in the Great Hall at Christ Church, Oxford, the Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, and 50 other churches in Britain.

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Some entertaining miniatures from the Open Tournament at Dos Hermanas, Spain:

Game one: In this all-Spanish encounter, Black plays the opening horribly to fall badly behind in development. In the final position, his queen cannot defend both f6 and a8, and 20...Bd4 loses simply to 21.Rxd4.

White: J Mager Black: J Palacios
1 e4 c5 8 d5 Bxf3 15 d6 e6
2 Nf3 Nc6 9 Qx3 Ne5 16 Nd5 Bxd6
3 c3 d5 10 Bb5+ Nd7 17 Nxf6+ Nxf6
4 exd5 Qxd5 11 0-0 a6 18 Bg5 Bc7
5 d4 cxd4 12 Ba4 b5 19 Bxf6 Bxf6
6 cxd4 Bg4 13 Bb3 Ngf6 20 Rad1 resigns
7 Nc3 Qd8 14 Re1 g6

Game two: Black's passive play gave White the chance of a nice combination with 30.Rxb5! when 20...gxf5 21.Qxb5 f5 22.gxf6 Qf7 23.Bg6 is fatal for Black. After 21.Rb7+! Black still refused the bait, though he might as well have taken it: 21...Kxh7 22.Qh5+ Kg8 23.Qh6 f5 24.cxf6 Qh7 25.Qxh7+ Kxh7 26.Rxd7+ is hopeless, but no worse than the game.

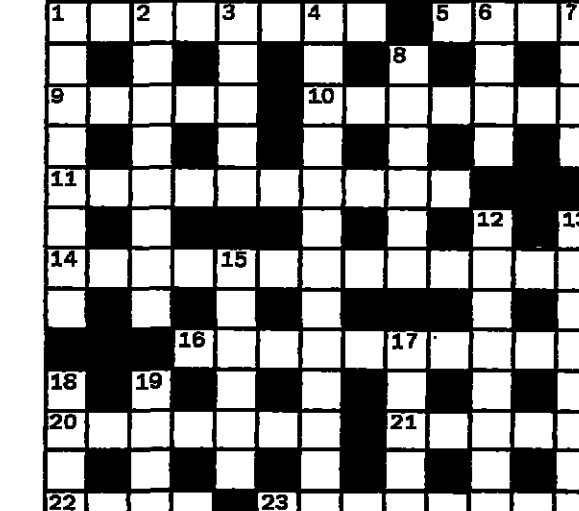
White: F Vallejo Black: J Castro
1 e4 Nf6 9 c3 Nxe4 17 Ne5 Bxg5+
2 e5 Nd5 10 Bxe4 Nf6 18 hrg5 Nxe5
3 d4 cxd4 11 Bc2 0-0 19 dxe5 Qe7
4 Nf3 d6 12 Bg5 Qd6 20 Rxb5 Kg7
5 exd6 Bxd6 13 Qd3 g6 21 Rh7+ Kg8
6 Ne4 Be7 14 0-0-0 Bd7 22 Rdb1 Qxg5+
7 d4 Nf7 15 h4 Ng5 23 Kb1 resigns
8 Bd3 N7f6 16 Qe2 h5

Game three: The Moroccan who went on to take first prize finds a neat combination to beat a Canadian former world title Candidate. At the end, 21...Nxe2 22.Nxf6+ Bxf6 23.Nxd6+ Kb8 24.Nd5+ Kg8 25.Nx7 wins a piece.

White: H Hamdouchi Black: K Spraggett
1 e4 c5 8 e4 Be7 15 exd6 Bxd6
2 Nf3 d6 9 Nc3 0-0 16 Nce4 Be7
3 d4 cxd4 10 f4 Nbd7 17 b3 b6
4 Nxd4 a6 11 Kh1 g6 18 Nf3 Bb7
5 Bd3 Nf6 12 Nf3 b6 19 Bb2 Nd5
6 0-0 Qc7 13 e3 Nh5 20 Ne5 Nxd4
7 Qc2 d6 14 Ng5 Ng7 21 Nxd7 resigns

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3800 Saturday 2 May



ACROSS

- Adds sugar to (8)
- Period of time (4)
- Shape (5)
- Bright red (7)
- Excited pleasurably (10)
- Surreptitious house move (8)
- Villain (10)
- Hide (7)
- African capital (5)
- Daybreak (4)
- Instrument for injecting fluids (8)

DOWN

- On an unspecified occasion (8)
- Volcanic event (8)
- Characterised by ebb and flow (5)
- Westfully (13)
- Nocturnal birds (4)
- Speed (4)
- Bewail (6)
- Satisfying (8)
- Scholastic (8)
- Flowers (6)
- Fashion house (5)
- Corrosive chemical (4)
- Winter precipitation (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Whale, 4 Aid (Waylaid), 7 Pall, 8 Shrapnel, 9 Rear Admirals, 10 Crunch, 13 Effort, 15 Ave-inspiring, 19 Long jump, 20 Wasp, 21 Sir, 22 Layby, DOWN: 1 Weave, 2 Aileron, 3 Eased, 4 Alpha, 5 Dresser, 6 Praise, 11 Reasons, 12 Hang-up, 14 Faraway, 16 Eager, 17 Papal, 18 Nasty.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

East-West game; dealer South			
North		East	
♠ A J 10 3		♠ Q 9 8	
♥ J 8 5		♥ Q 6 2	
♦ 8 6 5		♦ A Q J 4	
♣ K 9 5		♣ J 6 4	
West		South	
♠ 6 4 2		♠ K 7 5	
♥ 4		♥ A K 10 9 7 3	
♦ K 10 9 7 3 2		♦ none	
♠ A 8 2		♠ Q 10 7 3	

"I suppose, South said reflectively after this deal, "that if I get everything right, I can make 12 tricks." Seeing all four hands, that is an easy one, but your problem is to guess how he played to end with only eight tricks in his contract of Four Hearts.

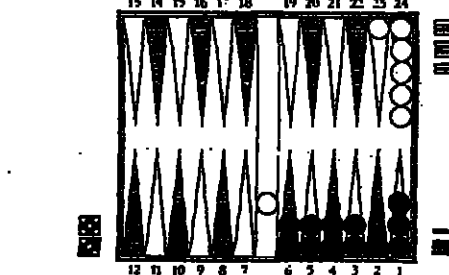
South opened One Heart and North (playing five-card majors) raised to Two Hearts. Hoping for a favourable lead if he did not reveal too much about his hand, South jumped to game. Mind you, if he had made any sort of try, North, with his maximum, would have accepted the invitation. All passed and West led ♠ 10 against Four Hearts.

Dealer ruffed, cashed his two top trumps (failing to drop the queen), and followed with a club to the king. Then came a spade to the king and a spade finesse. Thinking quickly, East ducked smoothly and, lulled into a false sense of security, declarer ill-advisedly came back to hand with a diamond ruff. Then he repeated the "marked" spade finesse and the roof fell in.

East won with his now bare queen, cashed ♠ Q and forced out declarer's last trump with another diamond lead. West, who had taken care to discard his ♠ 8 on his partner's ♠ Q, was now in a position to claim the remaining tricks.

Many apologies for the misprinted hand which turned last Saturday's bridge into a high-level deduction puzzle. We have identified the cause of the misprint and hope to avoid such problems in future.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Back to where we left off last week. It is double match point and Black has a 53 to play. How would you play it: (a) 6/1, 6/3 or (b) 5/off, 5/2?

The first important point here is that you at least see the possibility of playing 5/off, 5/2. Many players would automatically make the "forced" move 6/1, 6/3. How to evaluate such a position? The first thing is to look at the number of cross-overs (a cross-over moves a man from one quadrant of the board to the next or off the board). Here Black needs 11 cross-overs and White also needs 11 (four to bring his man on the bar to his home board and then seven to bear off). This means the position is close.

The other key factor is the blot on White's 2-point. If Black plays (b) and White enters with 22, 23, 24 or 26 hitting Black's blot then Black in turn will have the chance to hit White's blot, gaining significantly in the race. If White enters with 25 he should still hit the blot on Black's 2-point by playing Bar/23*/18 rather than play Bar/20/18.

The other benefits to (b) are that it takes a man off and maintains the 6-point for another roll. Compare the positions if White rolls 64 after Black has made his play. In case (a) White is a big favourite, in (b) he is still on the bar. The downside of (b) is that White may hit and then Black may miss, in which case White becomes a very big favourite.

Over the board it is difficult to balance these factors but, as I have said before, when in doubt be aggressive. I chose play (b), my opponent stayed on the bar with a 63, but backgammon being backgammon I lost when he rolled 66 with his final shake of the dice. Jellyfish analysis shows that Black will win the game 71 per cent of the time after play (b) but only 67 per cent after (a).

The mono pod

The taste of ... vanilla from Réunion.
Nikki Spencer samples sweet, spicy orchid riches

Vanilla originated in Mexico and was prized by the Aztecs, but it was on the small island of Réunion in the Indian Ocean, described as "France's best-kept secret" that it was first grown commercially. Until the 1840s, attempts to cultivate this rather plain-looking orchid in other climates floundered. Then an African slave, Edmond Albius, discovered that you could pollinate the flowers by opening them up with a bamboo needle and pinching the stamen and pistil together - a technique still in use today.

The vanilla orchid attaches itself to trees, and the seeds are found in longish pods hanging from the plant. The complicated process of pollinating, growing and then curing this aromatic spice makes it one of the most expensive in the world. The orchid flowers only for a few hours. Women known as *marieuses* hand-pollinate up to 1,000 blooms a day. The pods take six weeks to reach full size, and another six to nine months to mature.

The green pods, which have none of the familiar vanilla flavour or fragrance, are then cured - a three-to-six-month process that begins with a 20-second boiling-water bath, followed by heating by the sun. They are then wrapped in blankets to sweat (which activates enzymes to create the rich aroma) and finally dried to a deep-brown or black colour.

The plants like moderate shade, not too much sun, and just the right amount of humidity. Vanilla is mainly grown on the east coast of the island

between Ste-Suzanne and St-Philippe. In the town of St André, just in from the coast, is La Maison de la Vanille, an old Creole mansion set amid lawns, gardens and plantations, where you can trace the history of this increasingly popular flavouring.

Vanilla ventures

● La Maison de la Vanille, on the rue de la Gare in St André, Réunion, is open from Tuesday to Sunday, 9am-noon and 2-6pm.

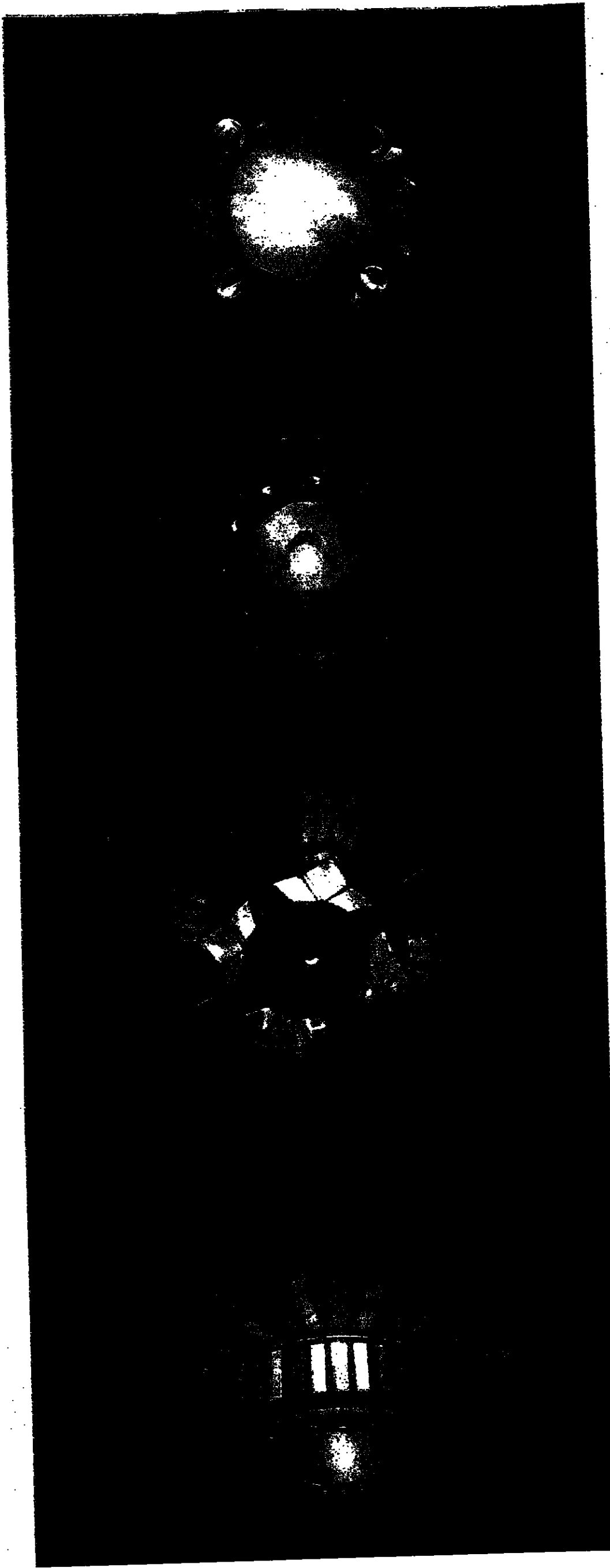
● Réunion is a trekkers' paradise, and the Lonely Planet guide to Mauritius, Réunion and the Seychelles (£10.99) devotes an entire chapter to it. Recommended is a two-day trek from the scorched summit of the volcano, Piton de Fournaise, down to the sea where a footpath takes you past "vanilla plants lazily wrapping their tendrils around filao trees".

● It is not that common to find vanilla from Réunion on sale in the UK. Birgit Erath, who runs the Spice Shop at 1 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 (0171-221 4448) reckons that vanilla from Madagascar, 800km away, is every bit as good. She has vanilla from Mexico and vanilla pods in bottles of Bourbon - which she says is great for pouring into coffee.

● Most vanilla-flavoured food has never been near a vanilla pod - it is usually flavoured with vanilla substitutes. But Sainsbury's has just launched Organic Madagascan vanilla ice-cream (price £2.49 for 500ml, available from Monday).



Vanilla: the pods take at least six months to mature
Photograph: Brian Limage/Anthony Blake Photo Library



Let there be light

Ever thought employing a lighting designer might improve an interior that needs that extra something?
Claire Gervat talks to an ideas man

There was a time, not so long ago, when for most of us buying lights meant a trip to B&S, and the main consideration was whether what you bought would illuminate all four corners of the room at the same time. But things have changed. We now expect our lights not only to make the room look good, but also to be objects of desire in their own right.

If the local shops don't throw up quite the perfect thing, there's no need to worry. Help is at hand in the form of Jack Wimperis, whose imaginative glass and metal constructions will turn the dowdiest interior into something remarkable. His current preoccupation is with outer space, and he draws inspiration from the comics and B-movies of the Fifties to create wall and floor lights that look like the flying saucers or rockets that Flash Gordon might have used.

That said, not all his previous pieces look as if they have just flown down to Earth, since he designs his lights very much with the idea of where they will be used. "I don't impose my will, but I do suggest what would fit with the architecture. I look at the room and explain what's possible. Generally, people don't know what can be done. So I'll take along my portfolio and we can look through it."

After that, Jack will do several drawings until the client is completely happy with the design. "It can be quite a slow process," he says, and he reckons to take an average of four to six weeks for each commission. Pricing depends on the size and complexity of the design: small lights cost from £60 to £400, but a large chandelier could cost thousands. If your purse strings are fairly tight, it's an easy matter to set a budget for Jack to work to.

Jack started as a stained-glass artist, serving his apprenticeship in Devon and from there moving to Ireland for two years. Here, he was asked to do some windows in a club. "They said, 'Oh, can you do any lighting for us?'" So I did them a load of lights around the walls and some sculptural pieces, and that's where it all started. I do a lot of club work in England now, along with the private work. So I go in, do the stained-glass windows and tie in the lighting with it."

One of his recent jobs was for a club in Blackpool. "They had a metal-clad corridor, and we did about 10 lights down each side. They were all different space scenes, so as you walk down it looks as if you're walking down a connection corridor or something. From some of the portholes you were flying over the Earth, some over the moon, some over Mars. They were all backlit, so they were like stained-glass windows, but as lights. When people think of stained-glass they think of Tiffany lights, which is not what I do."

The lighting now takes up about half his time, leaving the other half for stained-glass. For that, too, he can be commissioned, with prices ranging from around £5 to £20 a square foot, depending on the design and materials. Much of this work is for front door panels, but Jack cites as one of his stranger jobs the transformation of a downstairs loo, which was given a big, stained-glass backlit window, a mirror with a light on either side and a metal loo seat. "That was a great commission," he says enthusiastically.

And should the thought of a red rocket-ship table-lamp sound appealing, you will be happy to know that Jack is intending to produce an entire line of them shortly.

Jack Wimperis can be contacted at Co-Optic Studios, 31 Westward Road, Cairncross, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 4LA (01453 756894). More of his lighting work can be seen at the Chelsea Crafts Show and the 100% Design Show, which will be at Earls Court from 24 to 27 September.

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Higgins unzipped and relieved his bladder before returning



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON TALES OF SPORTSMEN BEHAVING BADLY

THE visuals at the start of BBC's *Match of the Day* offer a stylised version of the way disgruntled managers are supposed to behave during half-time team talks.

Joe Kinnear, who has maintained Wimbledon as a Premiership force in recent seasons, is seen banging his fist down on a table, disturbing the composure of a nearby cup of tea.

In reality, if reports floating back from the other side of the dressing-room door are to be credited, Kinnear and others who share his volatile disposition favour more extreme measures. Crockery takes flight. The tea urn gets tipped over.

Bruce Rioch, the former Arsenal and Millwall manager, has a reputation of being one

of the strictest disciplinarians.

His man-management style appears to have developed naturally from his playing days, when – the story goes – he took out his frustration on an apprentice who had failed to clean his boots properly by standing the wretched lad against a wall and using him for shooting practice.

Rioch's left foot, in its day, could have doubled for a steamhammer. I bet that improved the shine on his Adidas 2000's.

Of course we like to hear stories of sporting gestures. Gazza handing over his Littlewoods Cup medal to a non-playing substitute who, unlike himself, appeared for Middlesbrough en route to Wembley. How nice. He's a good lad at heart, isn't he? But stories of Sportsmen Be-

having Badly – these we love.

Gazza launching himself into the stupefyingly stupid challenge during the 1991 FA Cup final that caused him career-threatening injury. Gazza enraging the Celtic fans by pretending to be a flute player on a Protestant apprentice boys' march. Such incidents stir the blood.

On that subject, a frisson went through the world of athletics a couple of seasons ago when the rivalry of the international sprinting scene spilled over from the track into the lobby of the Nova Park Hotel in Zurich.

After racing over 100 metres in the Weltklasse meeting, Dennis Mitchell of the United States and Olapade Adeniken of Nigeria became involved in a disagreement which came to blows.

The cause of the argument

was never made entirely clear. Some said it was over a woman. Some said one runner had insulted the other's mother. Whatever, the tangible evidence of their dispute required to be sponged off the hotel carpet.

Athletics, like any other sport, has a history of misdemeanours. At the 1904 Olympics in St Louis, a New Yorker called Fred Lorz crossed the line first in the marathon, had been photographed with Alice Roosevelt, daughter of the US president, and was about to be awarded the gold medal when it was discovered that he had covered 11 miles of his journey in a car.

Lorz passed it off as a practical joke, but his national federation failed to see the funny

side and banned him for life.

Personally, I have never experienced a sportsman so breathtakingly out-of-order as Alex Higgins. Eight years ago I watched him play Dennis Taylor in the final of the Irish Benson & Hedges snooker tournament – held in the sales ring at Goffs, Co Kildare, where bloodstock auctions regularly took place.

The event was heavy with foreboding. The previous weekend, while both men were representing Northern Ireland in the World Cup, they had had a bitter row during which Higgins – a Protestant – was widely reported to have threatened to have his Catholic colleague shot.

By 1990, Higgins' high-point – the tearful world title win of 1982 – was a diminishing mem-

ory. The Hurricane was blowing itself out before everyone's eyes.

Higgins showed touches of the old, glorious certainty in the early stages, punctuating his nervy breaks with tippy-toe visits back to his seat for a drag or a slug of beer. A score of 54 was marked by a disco wobble, with cue held high overhead.

But as play progressed, Higgins deteriorated. While Taylor strode off between frames to compose himself, his opponent remained at table-side, chatting to spectators and downing what looked like his favourite tipple of vodka and orange.

Towards the end of the match I had left my seat and was talking to an official backstage in the yard where horses were held before entering the auction

ring. Sensibly, the stone floor was provided with gutters and drains to deal with the products of any nervousness among the assembled creatures.

As I spoke, I noticed a thin, waist-coated figure coming out of the arena. Standing above one of the drains, he unzipped his trousers and relieved his bladder before returning – with a faint smile – to the spectators and television cameras no more than 20 yards away. "Higgins' watering hole," said the official.

Earlier in the evening, Higgins had attempted to quell the noise of his more vocal supporters. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "This is the Irish Benson & Hedges. Can we have a little bit of decorum?" He meant it, too.

Burns sets tone as a Corinthian with attitude

GILL BURNS transports herself around the country in a car precisely 180,000 miles old and has not taken a holiday in almost seven years. If she spends little or none of her precious time worrying about money, it is because she has no money to worry about. "Disposable income? That's a laugh," she says. "You make sacrifices to play this game and the first sacrifice is whatever you might have in your pocket."

Her game is rugby and, without putting too fine a point on it, she is an extraordinarily accomplished performer; a fact she intends to emphasise over the two weeks of the third Women's World Cup, which began in Amsterdam yesterday. England are reigning champions and Burns, a No 8 from the Waterloo club, is captain of her country and the proud owner of 40 international caps, one more than Janis Ross, a flanker with Saracens and her oldest international ally.

She is also the only player to have scored in both previous World Cup finals and when you consider her physical resilience, her longevity at international level and a catalogue of complementary sporting achievements – Burns represented British Universities at hockey, basketball, swimming and athletics – she emerges as an explosive mix of Sean Fitzpatrick and C B Fry. A Corinthian with attitude.

Indeed, the most striking

The England women's rugby union team begin their World Cup defence today.

Chris Hewett met their dedicated captain

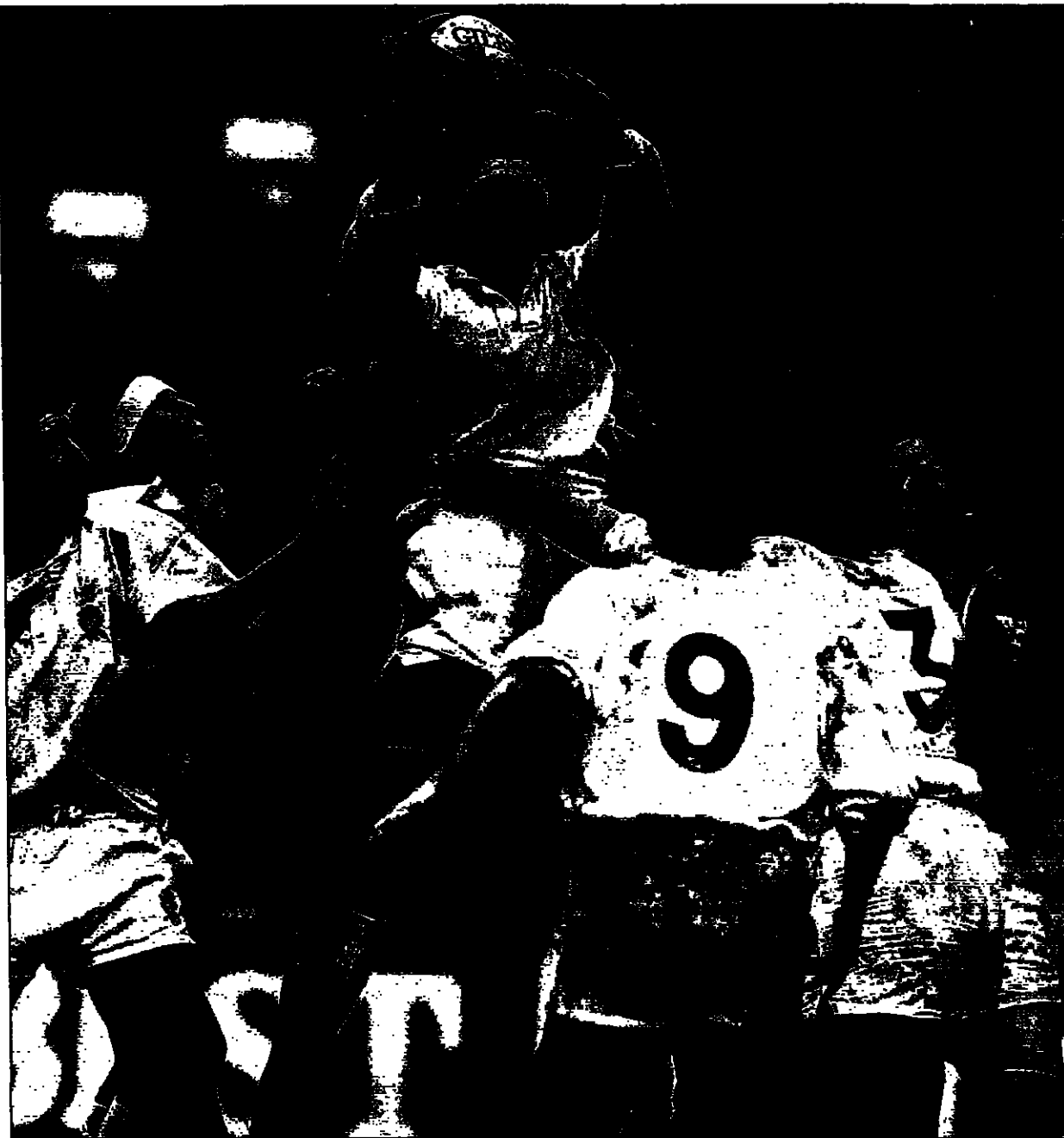
aspect of the 26-strong England squad who begin their campaign against Sweden today is the bewildering breadth of their sporting excellence. Paula George, for example, is a world champion netball player as well as an attacking full-back; Pip Spivey, the Clifton wing, is a nationally ranked pentathlete, tetrathlete and indoor rower; Teresa O'Reilly, a prop forward with Saracens, was a junior discus and javelin champion before moving into martial arts, where she won British and European titles in karate. Think twice before you take liberties with her. Os du Randt.

Thanks largely to a £146,000 grant from the Sports Lottery Fund, this England party will be more thoroughly prepared for the rigours of international competition than any of their predecessors. "We've just spent the most fabulous week at Lille-shall, which gave us quality time together," said Burns. "Back in the early days, we'd have to get someone to pick our shirts up from some motorway service station an hour before kick-off. I could never have imagined a situation in which an England squad could spend 24 hours a day thinking purely about rugby. That's how far we've come."

"That's not to say we're pampered professionals, of course. All the girls in this squad have spent a fortune and shown enormous dedication getting to the top level – Susie Appleby, Janice Byford and Helen Clayton all took career breaks to get themselves ready for this tournament – and in my opinion, there is still a lack of respect from people who presume to judge us without taking the trouble to watch us play."

"But the game in England is growing stronger almost by the day; indeed, it is officially recognised as the fastest-growing women's sport in the country. There are 10,000 girls playing serious competitive rugby, we have a stable of incredibly supportive sponsors and a national development team funded by the Sports Council. All we need to do now is go to Holland and sock it to 'em."

Socking it to a predictably tough and resourceful New Zealand side, who are seeded to meet the holders at the semi-final stage, will be easier said than done. "We played them over there last year and had our backsides kicked," admitted Burns, none too sweetly. "We were naïve, we defended poorly and we paid through the teeth. But we're a different



Leaps and bounds: Gill Burns (centre) believes England have improved since the last World Cup

Photograph: Empics

side now, both in terms of personnel and attitude, and even though the New Zealand girls have been writing us off in public, I'm confident in our ability to handle whatever they throw at us.

"We've taken big strides off the field and those have been

accompanied by improvements on it. We've always trained and trained damned hard, but we weren't necessarily doing the right training. Now we have balanced player-specific programmes, expertly compiled and rigidly adhered to. We're serious about this."

According to Byford, a front-row partner of O'Reilly's at Saracens, many leading male players discovered the seriousness of it all some time ago, especially their counterparts at Saracens. "We get a tremendous amount of moral and practical support from guys like Tony

Diprose and Richard Hill," she said. "And when François Pienaar first took over as Sarries coach, he encouraged us by saying: 'This club needs silverware and you're the people to win us some.' If he recognises the work we're putting in, we must be doing something right."

WRU loyalty threat to clubs

By Chris Hewett

THIS week's heavy-handed assault on England's Premiership clubs by Vernon Pugh, the chairman of the International Rugby Board, was put in ironic perspective yesterday as the full extent of the internal squabble in Wales finally became clear. Pugh, a former chairman of the Welsh Rugby Union, was given a timely reminder that the state of the game in his homeland remains more anarchic than anything currently happening on the other side of the Severn Bridge.

While Rugby Football Union officials were announcing the completion of positive peace talks with the Allied Dunbar clubs, details of which will be revealed after next Friday's management board meeting at Twickenham, the WRU has threatened to throw seven teams out of the eight-club Welsh Premiership unless they sign 10-year loyalty agreements.

Bizarrely, the one club not under threat of expulsion is Cardiff, who have been at loggerheads with the union for months and are in the process of hauling the WRU before the High Court. "I hope we can reach agreement with Cardiff without having to take this step but, whatever, they will be eligible to play in next season's Premiership until November, when the court hearing is scheduled," said Glanmor Griffiths, the WRU chairman. "We would also have to nominate them for next season's European Cup should they finish in the top four of the league this time."

The remaining seven club will attend a general meeting at Port Talbot on 17 May, where WRU officials will insist they sign as a condition of entry into next season's Premiership. "I fully expect them to sign," said Griffiths, who confirmed that a seasonal hand-out of £500,000 per club was on the table.

To make matters worse, Kevin Bowring, the national coach, is still not sure of his future, even though Wales are scheduled to depart for a tour of South Africa later this month. Terry Cobner, the director of rugby, would acknowledge only that his recommendation to the WRU had been delayed.

Title-chasing Saracens extend high-risk strategy

By Chris Hewett

SARACENS have lived so close to the edge over the last fortnight that one more piece of calculated brinkmanship should not make much difference either way. The Premiership leaders will take on a rejuvenated London Irish outfit at Watford tomorrow without four of their acknowledged "big six" – only Tony Diprose and Philippe Sella remain of the most cultured

set in the English game – and by way of raising the stakes higher, they have also decided to rest Ryan Constable, Steve Raven-scroft and Ben Sturman.

A risky business, certainly, but Saracens mined a rich seam of secondary talent during their epic victory over Harlequins on Wednesday night and the force is now with them to such a degree that it will come as no surprise if the likes of Matt Singer, Kevin Sorrell, Adrian Oliver

and Alex Bennett leave a lasting impression on the Exiles.

Tomorrow's game has come a day early for Michael Lynagh, who has not played since dropping the most memorable goal of a great career against Newcastle just over a fortnight ago.

The former Wallaby captain had a benign growth removed from his groin early last week and although he had originally planned to face the Irish, the Saracens selectors were more

concerned with ensuring his participation in next weekend's Telford's Bitter Cup final. "The stitches are out, but there is still some bruising," said Mike Scott, the team manager. "It's sensible to take the safe option."

François Pienaar, the player-coach, is also homing in on a cup final comeback after rwaning a hamstring during the Newcastle match. "François is still in South Africa after attending the funeral of Kitch Christie, but

he came through an eight-kilometre run on Thursday with no ill effects," Scott revealed.

The major worry concerns Kyran Bracken. The England and Lions scrum-half spends more time on the treatment table than most players spend in bed – he lasted only 40 minutes at The Stoop on Wednesday after missing the trip to Leicester four days previously. Saracens' cup final opponents are also keeping their

most potent powder dry for the big occasion. Wasps rest eight first-choice players for the London derby at Richmond: Lawrence Dallaglio, Simon Shaw, Mark Weir and the entire front row will be missing from the pack, while Mike Friday and Alex King stand down from the half-back positions. Jon Upton makes his first start at full-back since August while Adam Black comes in at loose-head prop for Darren Molloy.

Wasps' tinkering should not affect the poignancy of the proceedings, however. Richmond are 99 per cent certain to win sticks next season, either to Reading's new football stadium or along the road to The Stoop, so those who brave the spartan surroundings of the Athletic Ground this afternoon will sample an experience increasingly common in the ever-changing landscape of English rugby. The end of an era.

A parade of ineptitude from a tawdry collection of rejects and no-hopers



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

ONLY one man could induce me to watch more than one frame of snooker at a time, and that's Jimmy White, a welcome reminder of the sport's louche bedrock and the greatest player never to... (you know the rest).

So having clocked his progress through the first week of the World Championship (BBC2) – somewhat improbable progress given that he had been drawn against Stephen Hendry in the first round – it was distressing to see him capitulate so limply to Ronnie O'Sullivan.

"Jim's been playing the best snooker of anybody up to the quarter-finals, and it doesn't get any easier," O'Sullivan said before the match. He was wrong. Now you'll have to pardon my ignorance – maybe they're both like this all the time – but the physical evidence told you right from the opening frame who was going to win.

O'Sullivan strutted round the table with a macho little hip swivel, a tiny swagger of unbreachable confidence. White, meanwhile, looked like a man with a hangover (maybe he was a man with a hangover).

I don't know what kind of lifestyle he leads, but somebody should have a word. He looks so unhealthy. His eyes were washed out, his skin blotchy, and he seemed to go further downhill with each error. Every wasted opportunity opened the door to a whirlwind, and after a token White fightback, O'Sullivan blew him away. Poor Jimmy. Still the greatest player never to... As he so eloquently put it afterwards: "You can't play at his speed. Bosh. It's all over." Indeed it was.

The difference between O'Sullivan v White, and between your average pub players, is that the latter will proceed by incompetence: misses, not pots,

dictate the results, and the less crap of two players will generally prevail. Likewise, there are two types of American football: the real thing, as played in the NFL proper and the ersatz version peddled by NFL Europe (which used to be known as the World League of American Football).

One of the dubious pleasures of a brief sojourn in the Highlands this week was watching "Touchdown Scotland" (Grampian, Scottish), which featured a meeting between the England Monarchs and Scottish Claymores in what appeared to be somebody's back garden in Birmingham.

The half hour was a vibrant parade of ineptitude, all third-and-tens, sad sacks and frantic fumbles. Thanks to the Monarchs' defense containing more holes than Blackburn, Lancashire, the Claymores did at least score their first touch-

down of the season, the TD pass going to a receiver marked so badly he must have felt like that Saharan tree that was in the Guinness Book of Records for its remoteness and still managed to get hit by a truck.

Passes went straight to the opposition, who promptly dropped them; running backs weren't so much tackled as ushered politely into touch like Wimbledon champions being led gently by the arm around Centre Court with their trophy; defenders would get their fingers to tentative field goal attempts without quite managing to impede their progress. Not that it mattered too much: one attempt skewed to the left and ended up in Telford.

A few years ago I had the misfortune to witness the then London Monarchs at Wembley in a match chiefly memorable for the number of punts (they didn't even do that very well)

and the puppyish attempt at emulating the razzmatazz of the NFL. The principal benefit accrued from the day was the exercise involved in doing the Mexican wave that engulfed the stadium for the rest of the match after the first couple of hapless, risible drives made it clear we were watching rubbish.

If "Touchdown Scotland" is anything to go by, that was Super Bowl stuff compared to the present farraigo. I almost found myself doing a one-man Mexican wave just to liven things up a bit. How much longer will the NFL continue to underwrite this tawdry collection of rejects and no-hopers?

I'm only just getting round to mentioning *Planet Football* (C4), for which apologies to a mostly absorbing and intelligent series. This week Simon O'Brien and Steve Cram fetched up in Denmark and Norway with their usual recipe of history, fas-

cinating facts and coverage of a big game (in this instance, the World Cup warm-up between Denmark and Norway).

One in six Premiership players are Scandinavian, it probably won't surprise you to read, and it was instructive in a completely useless kind of way to learn that Manchester United have forked out more on players from that part of the world in the past year than Mancunians spent on bacon.

Equally instructive, and not useless at all, is the fact that last year, Norway's women's team, the World Cup holders, took on a male youth side in Oslo and beat them 7-0. John Jensen, the former Arsenal enforcer and Steve Cram's guest at the Denmark v Norway game, was having none of it, though. "I watched women's football once. I watched 45 minutes, then fell asleep." He should try watching NFL Europe.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

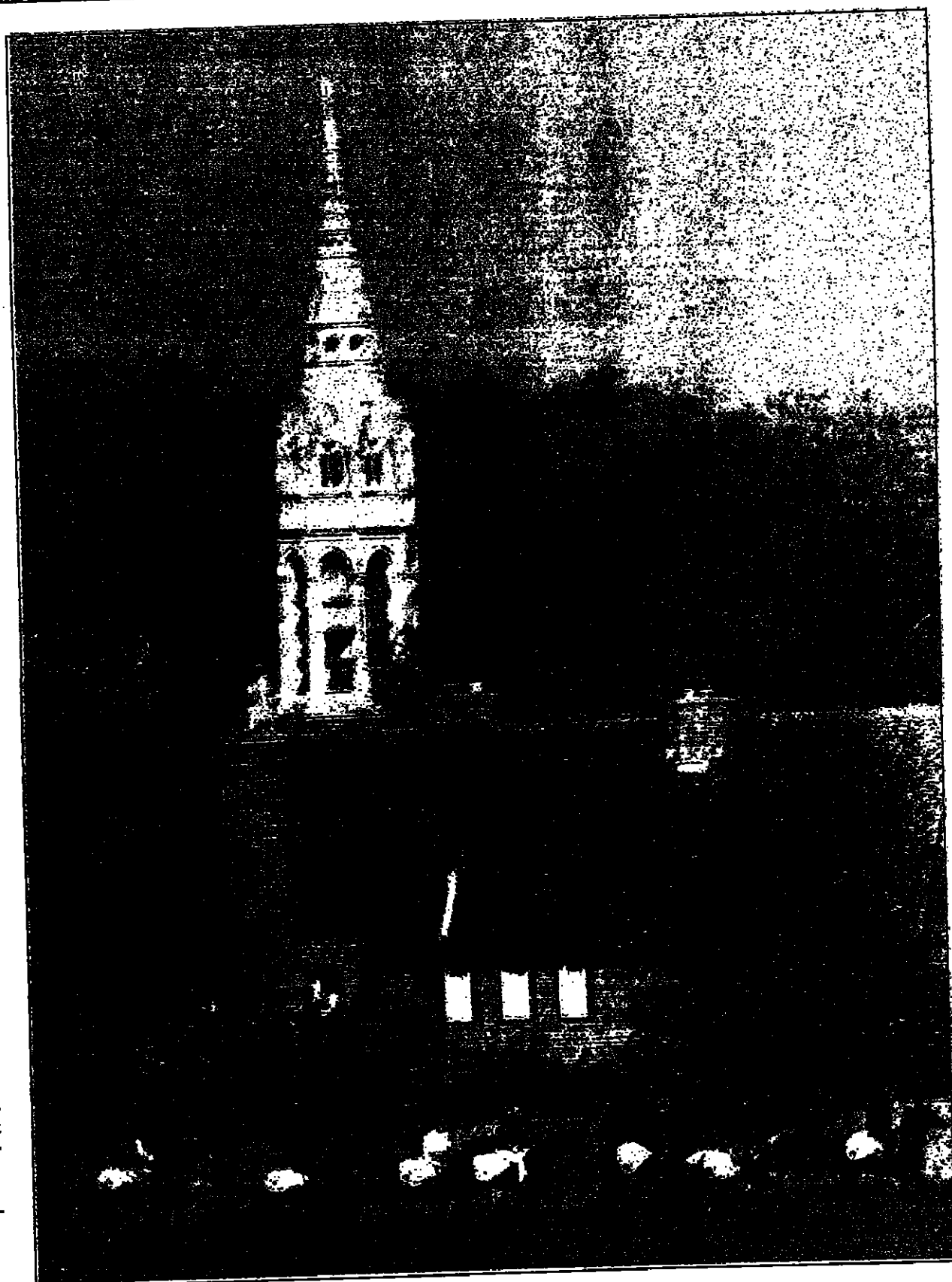
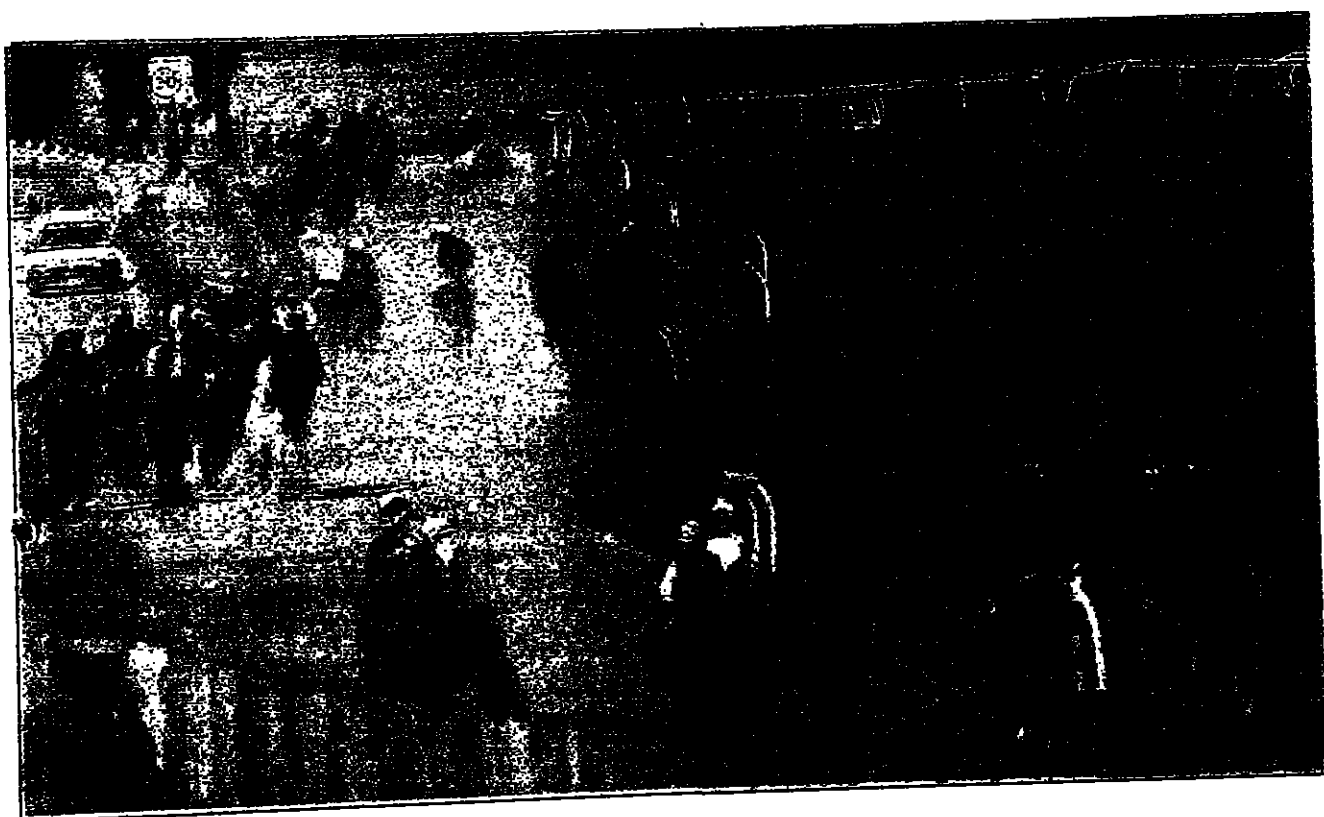
● I felt for him. There was no joy inside in that final frame. I was a bit sick for him. Ronnie O'Sullivan, suffers for being the man to beat Jimmy White at the World Snooker Championships.

● He's a terrific defender who is quick and can pass the ball. Alex Ferguson explains what convinced him that Manchester United should pay a world record fee for a defender of £10m for Dutchman Jaap Stam.

● The alcohol level was so high you could not survive with that concentration. Prince Alexandre de Merode, head of the Olympic medical commission comments on Michelle De Bruin's drug test sample.

● I'm innocent of these charges. De Bruin opens her defence.

15/PHOTOSHOOT



Newmarket prepares for its big weekend

NEWMARKET is always a bustling place during the Flat horse racing season but there has been a special air about the town this week. Just as the leafy suburbs of Wimbledon come to life in June in readiness for south-west London's fortnight-long festival of tennis, so Newmarket awaits its big weekend with eager anticipation.

The home of racing plays host today and tomorrow to the 2,000 and 1,000 Guineas, the year's first major highlights for the cream of this season's three-year-old crop. Today's 2,000 Guineas in particular holds the promise of the emergence of a true equine superstar. There are high hopes that Xaar, the odds-on favourite, will prove himself to be one of the best three-year-olds for many years.

In Newmarket this week the weather has been a major topic of conversation. With all the recent rain the going is likely to be soft. There were six withdrawals yesterday from the 2,000 Guineas and they could be joined by the Roger Charlton-trained Tamarisk if there is no marked improvement in the going this morning. At the moment there are 18 runners in the race.

Four horses were withdrawn yesterday from the field for tomorrow's 1,000 Guineas, leaving 16 runners to contest the fillies' Classic.

● Copies of these photographs – and any others by The Independent's sports photographers David Ashdown, Peter Jay and Robert Hallam – can be ordered by telephoning 0171-293-2534.



If anyone in Newmarket was in need of inspiration this week they might have visited the town's museum, where portraits of the legendary Godolphin and jockey Lester Piggott are on display

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN



Like every other yard in Newmarket, Giles Bravery's stable has been a hive of activity this week. One of the most important jobs is that of the farrier (pictured left and second from left), who ensures that all the horses are properly shod



IES & LANTS

TRACKS

Broccoli and bicycles: my part in Arsenal's success



THE GAFFER TAPES

I HAVE, in the past, been accused of being egotistical, self-centred and conceited, sometimes all at the same time. Now, Barry Gaffer's not that kind of guy and to prove it, even though Barry Gaffer is facing a traumatic weekend Barry Gaffer would rather concentrate on the magnificent achievement of one of Barry Gaffer's many friends in football.

Step forward "Arse of the Arse", as Monsieur Wenger is known to his closest friends, and congratulations on your imminent championship. I can take particular pleasure in your success, not just because my old man is an Arsenal fan, as the song goes, but because, in a small way, I had a little part to play in it.

Well, maybe not that little. I can remember when David Dein, the power behind Herbert Chapman's bust, was looking for a new manager. "Barry," he said, "obviously I would choose you, but we're looking for someone foreign - any ideas?"

Naturally I suggested Arsène, who I knew had forged a massive reputation in Japan where his innovative use of sushi and teryaki sauce had caused a stir from the Kashima Antlers to the Yokohoma Flügels.

Arsène and I hit it off immediately and he quickly confided in me. "Zees is a beaucoup job, but when it comes to Eengleish football je ne sais quoi. I have all zeeze old Arsenal types around me, but no one I can truly trust. Will you be my eyes and my ears Barry?"

First I explained about Herbert and George Graham, both championship winners, both involved in dodgy accounting, one a hero the other a villain. It was important to get the distinction right. I told him Chapman equalled Platini (God-like status, no criticism allowed), Graham equalled Tapie (forgiven by most fans, some media, none of the board).

Then I found him some players. Having spent so long in Japan he was a bit out of

date, but I convinced him Patrick Vieira, Emmanuel Petit and Marc Overmars were a better bet than Papin, Tigana and Johnny Rep.

The main thing was persuading Arse that sushi and rice was not going to go down well at the club canteen. "Battered fish and chips, they'll eat that," I told him, "but raw fish and Uncle Ben's? Mais non."

We ended up going round to my mum's house and, after trying a few possibilities like barbecued cauliflower and roasted spinach, we settled on the grilled broccoli which has become so famous. The boys love it, especially since we allowed them to have ketchup with it.

After that it was largely plain sailing, although I had to have a word when he considered playing Martin Keown in the hole during Dennis Bergkamp's suspension. The only other dispute was over his Tour de Circular Nord idea.

Arsène's a big cycling fan - it explains his lean frame - and

he thought the team would benefit from a weekly cycle race around the A406. I took him down to Neasden in the rush hour. said: "See you in Gants Hill in half an hour", drove down there and waited.

When he arrived, two hours later, his face covered in grime, his knees bloodied, his back wheel mangled and barely able to breathe for carbon-monoxide poisoning, he agreed I had a point. Instead they now go for a quick pedal round Chigwell's millionaire's row, and they all make sure to ring their bells going past Alan Sugar's house.

Obviously I would like to keep my part in Arsène's rise quiet. Fergie might not be too chuffed for one, and my own chairman will probably use such "outside activities" as an excuse for giving me the bullet - although it is not as if I've stooped to advertising Pizza Hut.

Alternatively, I might need a bit of publicity as he might just point to the league table

instead. If we don't win today we're down. It's very disappointing after all the hard work on the training ground.

We've got the cleanest comes in the Premiership and eight different types of coloured bibs, some of them fluorescent. It's taken me a long time to get such a collection together but it's been worth it - when the sun's shining the two-a-side matches really catch the eye.

We're almost at full strength for today's showdown, although Shaun Prone and Ivor Niggle are both out with broken jaws after an unfortunate start to the club cricket season. Prone had his broken trying to pull the local tearaway quickie, Niggle had his broken after trying to pull the local tearaway quickie's girlfriend.

* *The Highbury Cafe Cookbook - 101 Ways to Grill Broccoli, by Arsène Wenger and Barry Gaffer, now on sale at all good bookshops price £15.99.*

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

Nakayama: the man who can't stop scoring

Japan

MASASHI NAKAYAMA continued his incredible goal-scoring spree on Wednesday by netting a fourth successive J-League hat-trick.

Nakayama has now scored an amazing 16 goals in his last four matches, with tallies of five, four, four and three. His latest hat-trick came in Jubilo Iwata's 4-0 midweek victory over Consadole Sapporo.

Nakayama tops the League's scoring chart with 18 goals. He has also hit 12 goals in 24 games for Japan and is a certainty to lead their attack at the World Cup.

One of the more obscure hat-tricks of his career was scored in the humble surroundings of Scunthorpe United's Glanford Park stadium - a football venue for the 1991 World Student Games. In a 3-3 draw against Great Britain, both captains found the net three times before half-time. They were Nakayama and Jon McCarthy, now with Birmingham City.



AROUND THE WORLD BY RUPERT METCALF

Cameroon

ROGER MILLA, the player who did most to put his country on the football map, has been shunned by Cameroon in the build-up to their fourth World Cup finals.

Twice the African player of the year, Milla is unhappy at not being invited to help with Cameroon's preparations for the tournament. "I'm worried about how things will go for the

team in this World Cup," he said. "There's no longer any solidarity among the players, who are more interested in the financial than sporting aspect."

Cameroon, eliminated in the first round of the recent African Nations' Cup, have changed coach three times this season, with the Frenchman Claude Le Roy now in charge.

Now 46, Milla, who played in three World Cups, will still be involved in the 1998 tournament as a French TV analyst.

France

PARIS ST-GERMAIN have approached South Africa's World Cup coach, Philippe Troussier, for next season. Troussier met PSG's new executive president, Charles Bietry, in Italy last week while watching South Africa's striker Phil Masinga.

PSG, a disappointing eighth in the French League with one game to go, are undergoing a major overhaul for next season which includes the departure of the Brazilian coach, Ricardo.



Jaap Stam (right), the Dutch defender who is on his way to Manchester United for £10m, playing for PSV Eindhoven in their Dutch Cup semi-final victory over Twente Enschede this week. Stam's own goal gave Twente the lead but PSV recovered to win 2-1



39 days...

until the World Cup finals begin in France

SOUTH KOREA have sprung a surprise by including a 19-year-old forward who only became a professional footballer this year in a provisional squad of 22 players for France. Lee Dong-kook, from the Pohang Steelers club, becomes the youngest player ever called up for the national team. A former track sprinter, he has not surprisingly made a name for himself with his pace on the football pitch as well as the athletics arena. He has, however, only played nine matches for his club, in which he has scored four goals.

The dizzy heights of ninth place

AMONG the points to be won and lost in tomorrow's First Division programme, you might be forgiven for thinking that any gained by Stockport County at Edgley Park would be rather less important than, say, those sought by Middlesbrough, Stoke or Manchester City. Well, yes and no. While I'm not claiming that another good home result for County will overshadow relegation for Manchester City, one more point for County will secure ninth place in the First Division.

Ninth place, huh? So? Ninth place for many of the teams in the division would mean disaster. But for us, ninth would represent the highest placing in our 115-year history.

To the Johnny-come-latelys proudly sporting the latest Man Utd (oops, sorry, it's Arsenal this year, isn't it?) replica kit that might seem a pretty pathetic boast, but to those football fans who recognise that teams like Stockport are an integral part of what has sustained the professional game in England for all of those 115 years and more, it's an achievement well worth celebrating.

Of course, we're not really supposed to be in this division. It's a bit above our station. In the same way teams like Sunderland and Middlesbrough are below theirs. Fans of both these clubs took great delight in informing us of our true status when they visited Edgley - or at least

that's what I took the many cries of "Mickey Mouse club" to mean. Odd, then, that both sets of fans seemed so happy with the single point their teams scraped, Sunderland in particular being strangely delighted with a last-minute equaliser.

They weren't the only side to be outplayed at Edgley: the success of this season has been based almost exclu-

sively on excellent home form. Edgley Park might not have quite the same ring as Highbury, Old Trafford, or Anfield, but when you consider that we have had the grand total of five wins on our travels, a mere two draws, and a staggering 16 defeats, it's all the more surprising that we're not fulfilling most pre-season predictions of a swift return from whence we came.

I must admit the thought of experiencing my first relegation as a County fan did flit across my mind more than once. When we clinched promotion on a memorable night in Chesterfield (and you don't often see those last five minutes in close proximity) in April last year, I genuinely thought the First Division

play-offs were not beyond us in the coming season. We had already shown, by beating four Premiership teams in our Coca-Cola Cup run - three of them on their own grounds - that we could live with teams not merely in the division we were joining, but those in the one above.

However, Dave and Paul Jones (whose managerial acumen and goalkeeping skill respectively are evidenced by Southampton's first season without a relegation battle since the Middle Ages) departed, the board turned to the relatively unproven Gary Megson, poached from Blackpool, and the fans' thoughts turned to a season of struggle.

To Megson's immense credit, it was not so. Although we made a dreadful start, things were turned around to such an extent that at one stage we were actually sitting in a play-off position. It couldn't last, however, and as the season progressed, financial expediency meant that our board were not able to turn down bids from Birmingham and Middlesbrough for Chris Marsden and Alan Armstrong respectively - two of the stars of last year's campaign.

Chuck in no fewer than five broken legs (belonging to five different players, in case you were wondering), and it's no surprise that we could not hang on to sixth. What is absolutely amazing, however, is that we've still got a chance of ninth. Believe me, that's worth celebrating.

FAN'S EYE VIEW

NO 252 STOCKPORT COUNTY BY DAVE ESPELEY

SIDELINES

Ball's walk-on part in tale of two cities

ONE name would be guaranteed to unite the rival factions when Stoke City meet Manchester City in a potentially explosive relegation battle at a sold-out Britannia Stadium tomorrow. Alan Ball took both clubs down, so the irony will be that indeed if he now keeps Portsmouth up at their expense.

The two cities have had some three dozen players in common down the decades. Stoke certainly enjoyed the better of Peter Dobing, pipe-smoking captain of their League Cup-winning team of 1972, and of Mike Sheron, the £2.5m striker who is embroiled in the survival struggle with QPR. Adrian Heath, Peter Beagrie, Wayne Biggins and Nigel Gleghorn also made a greater impact at the Victoria Ground.

Stoke has traditionally been a stopping-off point for the Blues' surplus stock. David Brightwell, Wayne Clarke, Joe Corrigan and Harry Dowd all went to the Potters on loan; Jason Beckford, John Gidman and Dennis Tieart made the same move on free transfers, and Ian Scott, for £175,000, Sammy McIlroy, widely touted to be Stoke's next manager, was one of the few to reverse the trend.

Others who figure in the shared history include Tony Henry, Barry Siddall, Dave Watson, Howard Kendall and Paul Stewart. Oh, and an England colleague of Ball's who, in 16 years at Maine Road, won all the major domestic honours and then gave Alan Durban, Stoke's current caretaker manager, three stalwart seasons for £50,000. How both sides could use Mike Doyle's indomitable spirit tomorrow.

THE EX-FILES

Stoke City

Ten things that Palace's Swede Tomas Brolin might be missing today



- 1 His hometown, Hudiksvall. Nicknamed 'Glada Hudik' (lively Hudiksvall) by 19th century timber barons.
- 2 Lillfjärden - an idyllic lake in Hudiksvall. Said to be perfect for a leisurely stroll, a pace even Brolin can still muster.
- 3 Hudiksvall's buildings. "Old and new, in harmonious juxtaposition," says the tourist literature. Nothing like the future management structure at Selhurst Park then.
- 4 An aura of Abba.
- 5 Seal safaris in the Hudiksvall archipelago.
- 6 Köttbullar och makaroner - meatballs and pasta, a favourite.
- 7 Hälsingehambon. A regional folk dance contest, where participants are bussed around villages and dance in big circles.
- 8 Falcon beer. Like the Eagles, it goes down well.
- 9 The Speeders. A Shadows tribute band from Hudiksvall.
- 10 Viking artefacts, including cutlery carved from trees. (But Brolin at least has the Premier-ship's wooden spoon to remind him of home).

NAME OF THE GAME No 33: NEWCASTLE UNITED

For 10 years until 1892 the pride of Tyneside were known as Newcastle East End. The name was adopted in response to the formation of another club in the city, Newcastle West End, who moved to St James' Park in 1886. When West End went out of existence, East End were invited to move into St James' Park. Following the move the club voted in 1892 to change its name to Newcastle United.

THIS WEEK

ON 5 May 1951, all eyes turned to the bottom of the First Division where the two sides to be relegated were still to be decided.

One newspaper wrote: "Chelsea, Everton and Sheffield Wednesday are genuinely admired even outside the districts in which they play and failure, whoever it hits, will be regretted by many people besides the local supporters."

"This morning the position is that Chelsea (home to Bolton) and Sheffield Wednesday (home to Everton) have 30 points, and Everton have 32.

"The tangle will almost certainly be complicated tonight by goal average, as both Chelsea and Wednesday can be expected to win - a probability which would make all three level on points."

"At present Chelsea have the advantage in this respect. Yet if Wednesday win 6-0 and Chelsea win 1-0, then Wednesday can avoid the drop."

As it transpired, Wednesday did manage to win 6-0. "In a brilliant, pulsating affair... their victory was due to superb football." Unfortunately for them, Chelsea won 4-0, meaning Wednesday's triumph was in vain. Wednesday were relegated and Chelsea escaped. Everton went down, a feat not repeated since. (Yet).

HISTORY LESSON

As Doncaster Rovers prepare for their last Nationwide League game today they might be heartened by the experiences of previous clubs which dropped into the GM Vauxhall Conference.

Although Newport County went out of business the season after their exit from the League, four of the five other clubs to have been relegated have bounced back. Hereford United, who dropped out last year, are the only other club not to have done so.

Lincoln City (relegated in 1987) and Darlington (1989) both returned to the League at the first attempt. Colchester United (1990) took two years to win back their place, while Halifax Town (1993) have spent five years out of the League. However, they will return next season after winning this season's Conference championship.

With the exception of Maidstone United, who went out of existence not long after winning promotion, the teams who have come up from the Conference have generally fared well in their new environment.

Darlington, Barnet and Wycombe Wanderers all went on to further promotions - although the first two are now back in the Third Division - as have Macclesfield Town following their step up from the Conference last year.

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris, Paul Newman. Readers' contributions welcome. Send to Sidelines, Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL. e-mail address: sport@independent.co.uk

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Wenger unruffled by talisman's absence

EVEN by his standards, Arsène Wenger looked impressively unruffled as he conducted what will probably be his last round of press conferences and television interviews before Arsenal are crowned champions.

The top flight's two longest-serving clubs meet for what promises to be a momentous occasion tomorrow at Highbury, where victory for Arsenal would complete the first leg of a remarkable double and send Everton perilously close to relegation for the first time in 47 years.

Wenger would have little time for Everton's plight even if Arsenal did not want the three points so badly. Anything less than a win might leave the Gunners facing awkward trips to An-

field and Villa Park in search of a result, before meeting Newcastle in the Cup final in a fortnight's time. But those who came yesterday seeking tell-tale signs of stress in the enigmatic French manager's make-up were sorely disappointed.

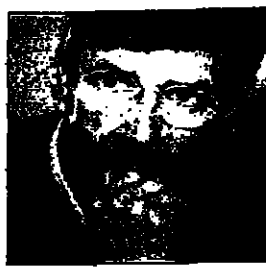
"It seems I still have a lot to learn about English tradition," he said with a smile after being informed that it is usual for the newly crowned Footballer of the Year to attend the Football Writers' dinner with his manager, even if it is less than 48 hours before being involved in the FA Cup final. Wenger originally had no intention of attending, far less Dennis Bergkamp if the architect of Arsenal's success on the field has

recovered from injury in time to play a part at Wembley.

"He has a pulled hamstring," Wenger confirmed. "It looks quite superficial but some fibres have been torn and that means two weeks at least, maybe three. He's had such a great season but unfortunately we have to finish it without him. I would have loved to have him until the last day but now it looks as though the championship is over for him. I still have a small hope that he could be back for the final but it [the recovery time] would be very, very short."

Following a disappointingly early exit from Europe and an indifferent spell in mid-season, Wenger can be sure that his own achievements will be fêted

Adam Szreter finds the Arsenal manager (right) calmly facing a crucial time without his Footballer of the Year



much further and wider than is customary for Arsenal managers. For while the results have been spectacular, the attractive style of their play has been revolutionary.

Criticised at first for importing a seemingly endless list of anonymous compatriots, Wenger can take great satisfaction from the way Emmanuel

Petit, Nicolas Anelka and Christopher Wreh have blossomed alongside Patrick Vieira, while the signing of Marc Overmars proved a masterstroke.

But with Wright out injured for the past three months it has been Bergkamp's contribution that has really captured the imagination and his manager was more than happy to heap

praise upon his talismanic Dutchman. "The beginning of the season was his biggest contribution because the team had no history at all," Wenger said. "They didn't know how well they could do, and he and Ian Wright were determined to help build the confidence up in the side. I think in the first 20 games they scored 18 or 19 goals together, which was tremendous."

"Dennis was unstoppable, not only because he scored goals but it looked so easy for him to run at people and through defences. He looked physically very strong. His third goal at Leicester, when he chipped the ball over the goalkeeper, was world class, and I also loved the goal he scored at Southampton

because it's a part of Dennis you don't often see. It was done with great determination, where he pulled the defender and went through and finished it with a very hard shot into the angle."

"He's a creative thinker, and I would say this kind of player needs a lot of freedom. One part of his brain is 'killer', because he waits for the right moment and tries to use it. He's also at the age when you perform best, between 28 and 32. You have the skill and the maturity. He can still improve in the next three years because it's in him to try. He loves perfection so there are no barriers for him."

If there is one criticism that can be levelled at Bergkamp it is his propensity for red and yellow

cards, and Wenger was honest enough to admit: "I think his temperament will always be a problem because he has a provocative way of playing for the defenders. So he will always be fouled and when he's fouled he doesn't feel happy and lets the referee know. I think he has improved during the season and, he's been man-marked many times, which creates more controversial situations than zonal marking."

Bergkamp's absence is a said way for the English season to end for the Footballer of the Year, but maybe even greater glory lies around the corner for him in France this summer - when Arsenal fans will doubtless still be pinching themselves.

Dalglish goes on charm defensive

Despite recent criticism, the Newcastle manager remains determined to keep his public and private persona separate, as Glenn Moore discovers

WITH a series of clicks the tape recorders went off and Kenny Dalglish's smile came on like an electric light. As it spread warmth and bonhomie across a Durham restaurant the other Kenny Dalglish, the one with hooded eyes, curled lip and sardonic tongue, slipped away through some unguarded back door. It will wait in the shadows until the next press conference.

Dalglish is not unique among football people in apparently possessing two personalities: many great players have reacted to the referee's whistle like a hypnotist's subject to a click of the fingers. Mark Hughes is the classic example, metamorphosing from soft-voiced, gentle family man to rumbustious, mauling centre-forward at the first peep from an Acme Thunderer.

Dalglish's transformation is subtler but no less startling. It has also been influential. His wariness with the media - both print and broadcast - has, along with the nature of his teams and the actions of a couple of club directors, turned Newcastle from everybody's favourite other team to the Premiership's most unwanted.

Today they play host to Chelsea with many neutrals still hoping they fail to gain the point or two they may yet require to avoid relegation. In a fortnight they contest the FA Cup final in the position, unimaginable two years ago, of being neither favoured nor favourites to beat Arsenal.

The recent post-match press conference after these two clubs met at Highbury, when Dalglish spoke of "people like you wanting to put knives in my back" and criticised one journalist's girth, and another reference last month to newspapers "only being fit to wipe dogshit off your shoes", brought Dalglish's relationship with the media to a new low. Thus on Thursday, partly on the advice of trusted allies, Dalglish participated in what the PR people would call a "charm offensive",

hosting lunch for a group of national journalists.

On the record, with the tape recorders working, he was polite but guarded, occasionally evasive and combative over team selection, Alan Shearer's conduct and the Stevenage affair. Off the record he was expansive, candid and often funny. This part of the conversation must remain confidential but, though the delivery was as defensive as ever, his on-the-record thoughts were still more revealing than customary.

Understandably Dalglish was at his spikiest when discussing Newcastle's season. "How far away are we from being in Arsenal's position? - 14 places, that's how far."

One hack boldly interjected: "It's actually 15 places," but Dalglish refused to rise to the bait. Instead he responded to the suggestion that Newcastle's League position did not reflect the quality of the squad. "It reflects our results. You can't hide from those. It is not something anybody gets any satisfaction from, nor is it acceptable. Is there more pressure at the bottom? The principle is the same. You are there to win games. I've been brought up all my life to win games and I've been used to winning games. We just want to win games for different reasons."

"There is disappointment, not frustration. It is not only for ourselves, it's for our supporters. That is the biggest disappointment. One or two things happened which have been positive. Getting to the FA Cup final gives the fans something to look forward to, something they've not had for 25 years; getting in the Champions' League gave a bit of a lift, a bit of glory. It's a mystery why we can't translate our cup results into the League."

Easier opponents? "We had Everton away, Stevenage, Tranmere who put out Sunderland, Barnsley who put out Man United. It's all right saying United weren't interested but I saw it on television and they were trying.



Criticised for his spiky attitude to all forms of the media, Kenny Dalglish prefers to keep the affability he shows in private away from the public gaze

Photograph: Allsport

Then we played Sheffield United who put out Coventry. It's not our fault opponents beat teams who were favourites to go through.

"We've no regrets over Stevenage. All we ever said was to put safety first and foremost. If we are wrong to do that we should not be a football club. If somebody wants to watch their team play, they should be able to watch in safety and comfort. If we don't ask the question, what do we do if we go there and something unforeseen happens? There's no way we were trying to be disrespectful. I phoned them up and told them that."

It is put to Dalglish that the memories of Hillsborough must have influenced his stand. The hackles rise. "Don't even ask that question. There's no way I'm going to go over that again. That's disrespectful to the people involved."

Dalglish's conduct throughout the Hillsborough disaster and afterwards has always been impeccable. We move back to discussing Newcastle's lack of goals. Is their perceived defensiveness a reason for Alan Shearer's apparent frustration?

"You justify that [charge]. There is no justification for that, and he's never levelled criticism at anybody. He's always the first to pay tribute for the service he gets when he is banging in goals."

"He may go wide now but he used to go wide at Blackburn and cross balls in. There's no difference. Now you're using Blackburn as a measure, but we got slaughtered when we won the League at Blackburn. We were top scorers twice in three years and we were still criticised."

If this sounds familiar it is because it used to be George Graham's re-

sponse when his Arsenal team was accused of being boring. Goals may be the lifeblood of football but scoring them does not automatically equate to playing attractive football. Look at Cambridge under John Beck.

"I would much rather win a game 5-4 than lose it 1-0. You certainly can't criticise Liverpool or Celtic for lacking adventure. Anything we say to defend ourselves will be deemed as moaning but there are reasons for it. I have a fair idea of what they are, but I'm not going to go public on them."

Injuries are one aspect, so is the sale of Ginola, Ferdinand and Asprilla. All, said Dalglish, left because they wanted to go. "If someone doesn't want to go, they stay. Given the choice I wouldn't sell anybody, but every manager would say that."

Another problem Dalglish had when he arrived in January last year was the decision of his predecessor,

Kevin Keegan, to disband the reserves (a factor in Darren Huckerby's departure before Dalglish arrived). Dalglish would not criticise Keegan but he did say: "People take decisions because they think it is right. I might make different decisions, but it doesn't mean to say the other person is wrong. I'll do what I think is right and the places I've been I've always put a heavy emphasis on development while remembering the first team is the most important thing."

There is a brief flash of on-the-record wit and disclosure when he discusses his appearance on *Newnight* with Jeremy Paxman. "They do well to get his ego on the television screen," said Dalglish.

Then the tape recorders go off, football's Victor Meldrew disappears and the other Dalglish slips into his chair. The contrast is discussed

and, since it is referred to in his autobiography, it is not betraying a confidence to reveal that the distrust stems from a bad experience with a journalist in his early days at Celtic. That may be a long time ago but he has seen ample evidence since to remain cautious and, while it may be unfair to tar all media with the same brush, he largely treats everyone equally, from golf partners to tabloid foot-soldiers.

However, neither the media, Newcastle, their fans or Dalglish himself benefit from the mutual antagonism that usually characterises his public relations. It is to be hoped that this week's meeting produces a thaw on both sides. It would be a shame if a great player and successful manager is eventually, and inaccurately, remembered by the public at large, if not those close to him, as a miserable curmudgeon.

Last act and testament to a professional footballer's career

FOR ALL Graham Taylor's qualities - he must have a few otherwise Watford would not be currently challenging for the Second Division Championship - he is not renowned for being a master of the soundbite; unless, that is, you are a tabloid headline writer or a television documentary maker. However, the former England manager did come out with some words of wisdom during Watford's testimonial for groundsman Les Simmons, maintaining that Simmons and his ilk were "the kind of people football should be honouring, not highly paid players who are set up for life."

It's been said before, and of course not all players are that, but Taylor's sentiments were valid considering Simmons had given Watford 50 years' service. Originally in charge of the dog track around the

ground, he was promoted to head groundsman in the early 1960s, since when he'd taken just five holidays, prepared Vicarage Road for over 1200 senior matches, campaigned to have an errant Tony Currie reinstated to the first team, and even wrung a pay rise out of Elton John.

It wasn't a huge rise, just "an extra tenner to help pay my bills" which he found in his weekly pay packet courtesy of Watford's then newly installed chairman after the board had refused his request. "That's Elton for you," he says, "good as gold."

It wasn't quite gold that Simmons received from his testimonial against Arsenal, but "over half-way to a six-figure sum," apparently. Enough for him to put away his pitch fork for a while, at least.

Good luck to him. Such loyalty

is a precious commodity in modern football, what with clubs desperately seeking a quick fix of success and players and managers seemingly at the mercy of that mentality. It's OK, of course, if you're at the top end of the scale in that elite band of players who can name your price, but not such a beautiful game for those clinging to the bottom rung of the ladder.

It's getting harder to make a case for testimonials in those higher echelons of the game where the money now flows so freely. In many respects they are anachronistic, a mercenary way of saying "thanks for the memories" - although at least fans can choose whether to support the player concerned. While it is argued that the worthier recipients are the one-club lower league players like Andy Porter (Port Vale),



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON LOYALTY AND THE REWARDS OF TESTIMONIALS

Alan Knight (Portsmouth) and Lee Rogers (Chesterfield), few would begrudge the likes of Gary Mabbutt a testimonial. Mabbutt has passed up a

small fortune in signing-on fees to stay with Tottenham, but when it came to rewarding him for that loyalty the club was parsimonious in the extreme. He even had to pay for the wattering of the ground for his testimonial against Newcastle in 1996; considering the crowd was just 17,200 one assumes it was hardly a bumper payday (£100,000 was the widely quoted figure).

Still, he wasn't out of pocket; not like one of his predecessors, the former Spurs stalwart Phil Beal, whose crowd receipts were insufficient to meet the cost of bringing Bayern Munich over to White Hart Lane for his testimonial in 1973.

These days that would never happen. Firstly, the Professional Footballers' Association (according to their chief executive, Gordon Taylor) "would always help out if a player

stood to lose out financially from his testimonial." Secondly, the testimonial committees - made up of fans and professional people rather than club employees so the player gets his cash tax-free - target certain clubs as opposition because of their away support (hence the reason Newcastle, Benfica and Chelsea were preferable to Sheffield Wednesday for Ian Durrant's recent testimonial at Ibrox, and why Arsenal want to bring Celtic down for Lee Dixon's impending gig).

Such lofty opposition is not always available in these days of crowded fixture lists, although most managers will bust a gut to get a team out to support those who are the most deserving: the 50-odd players who are lost to the game every year through injury and who would, as Taylor admits, "willingly give every pen-

ny back to carry on playing."

Man United sent a team to honour former Manchester City star Paul Lake recently, while Spurs sent a side containing the likes of Chris Armstrong, Moussa Saib, Steffen Iversen and Mabbutt to play in a testimonial for the former Gillingham midfielder Mark O'Connor last Tuesday in front of 3,033. "You dream of thousands coming," O'Connor admits, "and have nightmares it will be just one man and his dog, so I was thrilled."

However, the success of the night, in which O'Connor played the first 15 minutes and which Gillingham lost 3-1, and of the usual race and golf days also on his testimonial agenda, will never compensate for what he no longer has - his contract to play professional football.

Now 35, O'Connor broke his leg in a tackle with

Fulham's Martin Thomas in November 1995 and was out of action for 14 months before making a comeback. "I still felt pain," he recalls, "but I kept thinking the leg would get stronger. It never did." Advised by a specialist to retire, he is now scouting and helping run Gillingham's centre of excellence while he waits for his case against Thomas to come to court.

Incidentally, Glenn Hoddle was unable to fulfil his commitment to play for Gillingham on O'Connor's night. Perhaps Hoddle doesn't really rate testimonials, which wouldn't be surprising considering a miserly crowd of 13,567 watched his testimonial against Arsenal in 1985. Hardly a testimony to his skills, but then testimonials are no substitute for the real thing, as Mark O'Connor will tell you.



SPORT

Saturday 2 May 1998

Eagle's self-belief faces ultimate test

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

SHEFFIELD EAGLES must look to the past and to their own future for inspiration as they try to become the biggest underdogs to win at Wembley for a decade and a half.

Not since a homespun Featherstone team beat the world-ranked stars of Hull in 1983 will there have been an upset to compare with the prospect of Sheffield lifting the Silk Cut Challenge Cup this afternoon.

Leigh were equally unlikely winners before they beat Leeds in 1971. It is fair to point out, though, that neither had to overcome a Wigan team coached by John Monie.

Monie, who has never lost a Challenge Cup tie, insists that his side are not burdened by their overwhelming favouritism. "We're always glad when the bookies make us favourites," he said. "They're the ones who drive the Rolls-Royces."

It does mean, however, that the Eagles have, in the words of their captain, Paul Broadbent, "everything to gain and nothing to lose."

They have another incentive. Wembley will have its lowest crowd for decades and, although most neutrals will be supporting Sheffield, the empty seats where their own fans should be will be a reminder of how far they still have to go before they become big players in their own city. Their best reaction would be to say:

"OK, getting to Wembley wasn't the breakthrough we thought it would be. We'll have to win the damn thing."

It takes a real leap of faith to believe they can. Their coach, John Kear, promises that "we have tremendous self-belief and tremendous self-confidence", but, confronted with the best, that is not always enough.

Kear yesterday named a team with John Lawless starting at hooker, ahead of the equally strong claims of Darren Turner, and with Rod Doyle's extra defensive steel preferred to Martin Woods distributive skills at loose-forward.

Lawless' kicking skills are seen as part of the strategy to pin Wigan back during the first quarter of the game. "If it's nil

nil after 20 minutes, I'll be delighted," says Kear, who has seen Wigan blitz so many sides early in big games.

Wood and Turner are on the bench but there is no place for Marcus Vassilakopoulos, whose status as the only Eagle to have appeared in a Wembley final - for Leeds - shows their lack of big-match experience.

Wigan's three years away from Wembley and their rapid turnover of playing staff since Monie's return means that they have nine players who have not appeared in a final at Wembley before.

The difference is that the nine include players like their remarkable full-back Kris Radlinski, who has played there three times as an international, and

the Australians, Danny Moore, Mark Bell and Robbie McCormack, who, between them, have played in Grand Finals, State of Origin series and Tests.

There is no comparison between the depth of experience in the two squads, nor do Sheffield have certainties for any World XIII like Andy Farrell and Jason Robinson, who are the favourites for the Lance Todd Trophy as man of the match.

The only Wigan player who could be termed a risk is the 21-year-old centre or second row, Lee Gilmour, and only because of his limited first team opportunity so far. But Gilmour was as cool and confident as any of the veterans renewing their old acquaintance with the stadium yesterday. There is no tradition

of Wigan players under Monie's tutelage freezing on the big day.

Nor can Sheffield count on any complacency. That is not in the repertoire of people such as Monie or Denis Betts. There might be those within the club who expect the Eagles to fall flat on their faces, but the players will not be listening.

Sheffield can make a real contest of it. "We know that when we get it right we are a match for any side in the competition," says Broadbent.

If he and Dale Laughton can tear into Wigan from the start, they can get it right for a good part of the match, but not, you have to fear, for the full 80 minutes.

Holgate changes his spots, page 19

WIGAN V SHEFFIELD

at Wembley Stadium	
K Radlinski	Full-back
M Bell	Winger
G Connolly	Centre
D Moore	Centre
J Robinson	Winger
H Ford	Stand-off
T Smith	Scrum-half
T Pearson	Prop
R McCormack	Hooker
S Holgate	Prop
D Betts	Second row
S Houghton	Second row
A Farrell, capt	Loose forward
Substitutes: L Gilmour, M Carr, J N. Cowie, T O'Connor	
Substitutes: L. Sneyd, J. Wood, M. Jackson, D. Turner	
Referee: S. Cummings (Widnes)	
Kick-off: 2.45 (BBC1)	

Hampshire's stroll in The Parks fails to materialise



David Leather, of British Universities, appeals in vain for an lbw decision against Hampshire's Jason Laney at The Parks yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Scholes and Butt stay at United

Football

By Nick Dumbury

THEY may have lost the championship, but Manchester United appear determined not to be beaten in the race to sign the world's best players for next season while ensuring their home-grown talent stays put at Old Trafford.

United's bankers will have welcomed the outcome of Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt's pay negotiations, the players having committed the peak years of their football lives to the club with new, seven-year contracts. The duo, both now England players, have signed deals - reported to be worth £1m a year - that will keep them at United until June 2005, by which time they will both be 30.

However, the club's financiers will have felt a shiver on hearing the news that after putting in a call to Juventus to determine the price of the striker Alessandro del Piero and making PSV Eindhoven's Jaap Stam the world's most expensive defender at £10m, United have reportedly shown an interest in Real Madrid's Roberto Carlos, the Brazilian full-back with the thunderous banana free-kick.

The Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* was telling its readers yesterday that United are prepared to pay a staggering £53m as a down payment to buy the 25-year-old Carlos' contract from Real. However, United balked at paying £25m for Del Piero, whose wage demands would have cost another £25m over five years. Carlos' pay cheque is hardly likely to be less.

At present, Carlos is preoccupied with Real's meeting with Juventus in the European Cup final on 20 May.

Manchester United have told us they are willing to pay the waiver clause price to end the player's contract and that they will get in contact with Real after the final. Oliveira Junior, one of the defender's agents, said Carlos' waiver clause is set at £60m, but only £53m would have to be paid to the Real.

Howard Kendall has won his struggle with the Everton chairman, Peter Johnson, to sign John Spencer immediately. Kendall was ready to resign if Johnson pulled out of the transfer after blocking it earlier this week. However, Kendall told Johnson that Everton had a "moral duty" to push through the £1.5m deal for the Queen's Park Rangers striker, who had undergone exploratory heart surgery in order to pass a medical.

Ron Noades, the Crystal Palace chairman, is planning to take control of Second Division Brentford for £750,000 should Mark Goldberg succeed with his £30m takeover of Palace.

Football, pages 20-23

ON MONDAY

28-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

"I still find it difficult to get my head around a passport with the words 'rugby player' on it. That seems wrong, somehow. Rugby has been a pretty demanding way of life, but it was my choice and I've always derived enormous satisfaction from it" - Michael Lynagh tells Chris Hewett how he is preparing for a life after rugby



TODAY

11 PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 14

O'Sullivan suffers for loss of concentration

Snooker

By Guy Hodgson
at The Crucible, Sheffield

IT CANNOT be easy having your concentration on a hair trigger. One minute you are washing up, the next you have been diverted on a night out, which, if nothing else, makes the Marigolds hard to explain. Such is the fate of Ronnie O'Sullivan.

If God felt inclined to pick a snooker team, O'Sullivan would be in it. The man could pot where others can only ponder but the sad thing is he would be first reserve for the celestial mind wanderers, too. As a consequence he trails John Higgins 12-4 after two sessions of their Embassy World Championship semi-final.

It was an afternoon where, if you were part of O'Sullivan's back-up team, you would have been tempted to run out into the arena and give your man a thorough shaking to wake him up. In every frame he got in amongst the balls and on each occasion a slip would betray him. Higgins, who got better as the story repeated itself, could barely believe his good fortune.

Eight frames lost in succession. O'Sullivan should not do that if he was playing left-handed - which he is perfectly capable of.

Higgins was brilliant. O'Sullivan so bad you wonder about his fate in the game. The theory is that he has too much of a grip on himself to overtake Jimmy White as the best player never to win the world championship, but yesterday you were not so sure.

"Concentration isn't the strongest part of my game," O'Sullivan said before the match, "and when I get a big lead I let opponents back in sometimes. I've got to learn to finish people off."

Yesterday a big lead would have been a luxury. Level at 4-4 from Thursday, the need was to make sure you picked up at least one frame of the frames. Nothing fancy, just an accumulation job and anything else is a bonus. Higgins, as clinical as a syringe, understood; the notion appeared to have slipped O'Sullivan by.

In the first frame of the day the 22-year-old Londoner missed a green to allow Higgins to feast on the colours, in the next he was 51-0, got a kick to go out of position and, a missed black later, his opponent was on his way to making the score 6-4.

"I've played John a lot of times and every time he has beaten me I haven't played well enough," O'Sullivan said. "He's similar to Stephen

Hendry, very consistent. He never lets his game drop below a certain standard. I'm going to have to play better against him than I have against any other player so far in the tournament."

Some chance. You are reluctant to accuse players of losing the will to try but by the end O'Sullivan was exhibiting all the signs. Shots he would flick in with barely a thought in practice were acute angles out in execution, his face pale with demoralised shock. The Rocket, who salvaged only two points in the last four frames, had run out of fuel.

Meanwhile Higgins rolled on remorselessly, ending with breaks of 79, 84, 79, 97 and 52. The Scot needs just five out of 17 frames today to reach his first final and such was the psychological wreckage sitting in the opposite chair he could achieve that in this morning's session.

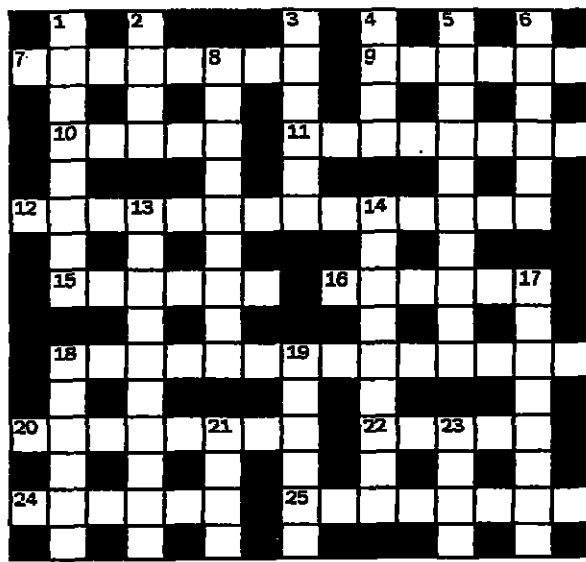
That was a rout, the other semi-final took on an altogether different character yesterday morning as Mark Williams, the world No 4, clawed back from a 6-2 deficit to level 8-8 with the reigning champion, Ken Doherty. Their match, unlike O'Sullivan, looked destined to go the distance.

Results, Digest, page 19

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

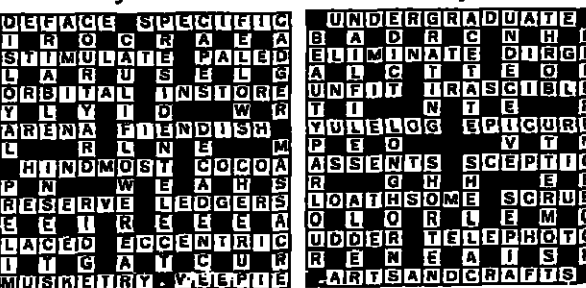
No. 3600, Saturday 2 May

By Phil



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



ACROSS

- 7 Detract from fast food? (4,4)
- 9 Jinx covering rings (6)
- 10 Charge bound to involve billions, reflection (5)
- 11 Comedian married during his tour abroad (8)
- 12 Bureaucrat having zero scope in supplying fruit (8,6)
- 15 Follow a Duke in the parade? (6)
- 16 One clad in red colour isn't this! (6)
- 18 Sweet's power - all in the cocoa, possibly (5,9)
- 20 Both parents will appear in London street (4,4)
- 22 Beheading allowed? That's terrible (5)
- 24 Fruit container made from joke mesh (6)
- 25 Not great shot - but not missing (2,6)

DOWN

- 1 Lightweight continent? (8)
- 2 Cooking ingredient in what might be Mrs Beeton's book (4)
- 3 What supplies some fizzing in busy phone-lines? (6)
- 4 Women having that chap on impulse (4)
- 5 Trailer not shifting? It may be very heavy (10)
- 6 Quiet person snaffling second dessert (6)
- 8 Weaken novel in excluding ship (5,4)
- 13 Try unsuccessfully to write cheque (forgetting the amount) (4,1,5)
- 14 Indecisive cattle run astray (9)
- 17 Bed supplier suggesting other changes about rest (8)
- 18 Source of oil worth little in quantity? (6)
- 19 How to incorporate lines on love without meaning (6)
- 21 Creative political group wanting leader (4)
- 23 Stole, perhaps, getting Yard in a rage (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive handpicked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4015, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Wilson, Brinsford; T Parnham, Dorset; O Davies, Penarth; J Cusack, Bournemouth; M Freeman, Winton-at-Stones.

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Saturday 2 May 1998

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هكذا من الاصل



YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, motoring and property

Saturday 2 May 1998

Language barriers

Since the Plain English Campaign launched its honesty mark scheme for sales literature only one financial services firm has dared to declare that 'what we say is what the public gets'. Paul Slade reports

Honesty, truthfulness, simplicity and ease of understanding ought to be essential elements of any firm's products. All the more so in the financial sector, which has been plagued in recent years by one scandal after another.

Savers are left baffled by incomprehensible literature, the salespeople who contact them make astonishing claims for their products - and, when a claim is made or a policy has to

be abandoned, there is always some clause there to penalise or deny people their rights. Things ought to be ripe for change.

Yet a Plain English Campaign (PEC) initiative to flag up honesty in sales literature, launched a year ago, has found few takers in the personal finance industry. In order to win their company's literature a Plain English Campaign honesty mark, top executives must

sign a declaration that "What we say is what the public gets". So far, only one financial services company has been brave enough to do this - and then for only a single document.

That company is Colonial Financial Services. It carries the honesty mark on the Colonial Investment Bond's key features document, which customers receive as part of the sales process.

A large Irish financial institution will announce plans to include the mark on the customer brochures and policy documents for a range of five new life insurance policies in May or June. But so far there have been no other takers among insurance and investment firms.

The honesty mark adds a halo to the PEC's existing "Crystal Mark". The declaration must be signed by the company's managing director, company secretary and lawyer or draftsman.

PEC director, Chrissie Maher, says the idea of the honesty mark is to show customers that nothing important has been left out of the document or buried in the small print. "We tested it in 15 cities and the whole market said, 'Yes, that would be fabulous'", she says. "We then, threw it into the arena and had no takers whatsoever. I wasn't surprised."

The Irish group - which asked not to be named ahead of the new range's official launch - will give the honesty mark its biggest boost yet from the financial services industry. A spokeswoman for the group says: "It's saying there's no hidden extras, and no small print - what you see is what you get. At the end of the day, people just want honesty."

Ms Maher says: "The Irish are galloping ahead of the English at the moment. A lot of the big companies have fallen at the fourth or fifth hurdle, because the lawyers wouldn't sign it. That tells me a lot about mortgages, pensions and life insurance companies - what are they hiding?"

The declaration which companies must sign also gives the



A lot of rhubarb...

At the end of this month Plain English Campaign's director, Chrissie Maher, will be lecturing in Brussels as part of the European Commission's Fight the Fog programme.

No doubt Europe will continue to provide British consumers with plenty of impenetrable prose. But there is plenty of home-grown gobbledegook, too.

Richard Hunter, managing director of London independent financial advisers Holden Meehan, picks a section from a local council's employee pension scheme booklet as his own favourite example. It reads:

"The calculation of the death grant is slightly different if the employee was in receipt of a pension as a result of a frozen benefit coming into payment or if he retires in the income tax year he would have attained state retirement age and had less than two years reckonable and qualifying service."

Mr Hunter says: "I find it quite annoying that normal people, who are not involved in this sort of stuff, have to make their way through massive sentences like that."

If it's massive sentences you're after, a recent resolution from a Scottish Amicable Investment Managers' AGM takes some beating.

This runs to a punctuation-free 174 words, and holds the 1997 Silver Rhubarb award. The Rhubarbs are given each year by the Plain English Campaign, another clarity watchdog.

The resolution reads: "That in substitution for any existing power under section 95 of the Companies Act 1985 (as amended and from time to time in force) ('the Act'), but without prejudice to the exercise of any such power prior to the date hereof, the Directors be and are hereby empowered pursuant to section 95 of the Act, to allot equity securities (as defined in section 94(2) of the Act) for cash pursuant to the authority contained in the Special Resolution dated 3rd April 1995 given in accordance with section 80 of the Act as if section 89(1) of the Act did not apply to any such allotment even if shares are allotted for cash at a price below the relevant net asset value per share provided that this power shall expire on 20th September 1998, save that the Company may before such expiry make an offer or agreement which would or might require equity securities to be allotted in pursuance of such offer or agreement as if the power conferred hereby had not expired."

How to drive down insurance premiums

As the cost of house insurance falls, motorists are seeing premiums rise. As Nic Cicutti discovers, it pays to shop around

Insurance premiums for most motorists are set on an upward trend over the next few months, according to new research. The cost of home and contents cover continues to fall for the time being, though insurers are predicting a heavy knock-on effect from the week of April's storms.

The average cost of car cover rose by more than 1.5 per cent in the past quarter compared with the previous three months, according to the AA's insurance arm. Home insurance dropped by 1 per cent over the same period.

Yet both drivers and homeowners could still save pounds if they bothered to shop around for the cheapest quote. In some cases, motorists could top more than £150 off the cost of an average comprehensive insurance premium of £400 by making a few phone calls. Even homeowners could save £34 on average by finding the lowest buildings cover, or double that amount if home and contents insurance is considered jointly.

The survey underlines the importance for motorists and homeowners of doing "insurance homework" every



After the floods: April's storms will be costed into policies. Geraint Lewis

year, no matter whom they have taken out cover with.

Geoff Lowe, director of AA Insurance, says: "Most people love to get a bargain and it is well worth contacting a number of insurers for competitive quotes, or getting a broker to do it for you."

"The recent floods and increase in claims, though, is expected to affect reinsurance premiums and we are predicting a knock-on effect to be reflected later this year."

The AA's survey involves 50 so-called "risks", typical policyholders selected on the basis of age, location, occupation, sex and type of car or

property, depending on what is insured. Price movements are checked each quarter to see whether they rising or falling, with 37 of the UK's leading insurers being polled, including the cheaper direct telephone-based ones.

The survey found that while the cost of most motor insurance had risen by anything up to 3.5 per cent in the last few months alone, some drivers are still paying less than they would have been in 1994.

For example, a male vet in Northamptonshire would have paid £717 to obtain fully comprehensive cover for his Mercedes 190. By April this year, insuring

the same car would cost £671, including insurance premium tax of 4.5 per cent.

The AA also finds that shopping around pays: the average cost of the three cheapest policies was £150 lower than the overall average for comprehensive cover.

Similar results appear in the home survey. The average buildings premium is now more than 10 per cent lower than it was in January 1994, while contents premiums have also dropped by almost 7 per cent over the same period.

In one example, a four-bedroom bungalow in Edinburgh, which would have cost £122 to insure in July 1994, would now cost just £104, including insurance premium tax, a drop of more than 14 per cent.

The cost of home and contents cover has also fallen compared with the three months ago, with the same "risks" being almost 1 per cent cheaper for buildings cover and 0.24 per cent for contents, on average.

One new feature of car cover is that the average comprehensive policy now costs less than the average non-comprehensive cover. This, the AA says, is because those who take non-comprehensive cover are newer drivers who have not yet built up a no-claims discount. This is increasingly important in terms of reducing the cost of premiums. Moreover, the premium also reflects the risk represented by the driver, rather than the net replacement value of the car itself.

the company's documents for customers will eventually carry the honesty mark. This may give the company a commercial

edge under the Government's proposals to "kitemark" products which are easy to understand, she adds.

"There are a lot of companies that put a lot of stuff in small print, all squashed at the bottom. A financial services document is an ideal document in which to hide information, because it's so complex."

Ms Crossfield hopes that all

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INDEX

Checkout rates

Sainsbury's Bank, the foodstore chain-cum-bank, this week turned up the screws on its traditional rivals by accusing them of underpaying some £330m in interest each year on low-interest instant access accounts. The neo-bank claimed savers were losing an average of £25 a year, on average deposits of £1,000. Meanwhile, Sainsbury's now has 700,000 customers and £1.5bn on deposit.

Euro cheques

Thomas Cook will be adding euro currency travellers cheques to its existing range from next year. The travel firm said its move would let travellers guard against fluctuating exchange rates while abroad.

Charge sheets

Finding out what charges are levied on your pension or endowment can be fraught with difficulties. Sometimes providers' figures are simply wrong. Janet Walford and John Chapman report. Pages 6, 7.

Future homes

Buying a new home is more than choosing the right bricks and mortar nowadays. Penny Jackson finds some purchasers are prepared to pay thousands for full-grown trees to be planted, while Andrew Mylius visits new internet-linked communities. Pages 10, 11

Safeway

Safeway has asked us to point out that the videos we referred to last week earn only 12 points each at the standard rate under its ABC loyalty card scheme. Customers could get 36 points if they had qualified for triple points by spending £240 the previous month.



The cost of picking wrong policies

NIC CICUTTI

A few weeks ago, the Consumers' Association (CA) published a report on "financial disclosure". This is the term given to a rule forcing insurance companies to tell their prospective clients exactly how much will be taken from policies they buy.

The CA report concluded that most people were baffled by the financial information they receive and consequently don't bother reading it. "See," cried sections of the financial industry, "the CA admits that forcing us to provide all this information to clients was a waste of time."

Actually, it said nothing of the sort - merely that when details are given of how much a policy will cost to take out, the information should be clear and relevant.

It is these issues which John Chapman and Janet Walford try to address in our centre pages this week. John, formerly a senior official at the Office of Fair Trading, argues that companies rely on the poor information we are given to sell us duff products. He puts forward his own alternative form of disclosure, plus a proposal on how products should be "benchmarked" or assessed as to their value at various stages in their lives.

Janet's story ties in with this. She is the highly esteemed editor of *Money Management*, a financial magazine which specialises in researching financial products, and her claim of how one company, Allied Dunbar, supplied her with wrong information for a survey on pension products makes important reading.

The company was asked to give details of what one of its 25-year policies would be worth if a person was unable

to keep paying into it after two years and the money was left in there for the rest of the term. Essentially, the answer should have been zero. But Dunbar supplied details of another policy, which would have left £13,000 in the pot - quite a difference.

I should point out that Allied Dunbar disputes her story. The company says the details it passed to *Money Management* were of a policy where a person who is unsure of their future need only pay into for two years, without incurring huge future penalties. This, it claims, was repeatedly pointed out to the magazine and no attempt at deception was involved. Of course, Allied Dunbar, or "Allied Crowbar" as it was once known thanks to the forcefulness of its salespeople, is a highly reputable company and I accept its word entirely.

But what annoys me is its additional argument. The firm says that its advisers can only offer products based on what they are told by clients. Thankfully for all the Mystic Megs who know what their future hold two or three years down the line, the company has a policy with low charges for them.

But if you or I tell a Crowbar salesman that we expect to be able to keep on making contributions for the next 25 years and we suddenly get made redundant after two years, that's our problem, in other words.

I'm sure it is. But given that all our futures are so uncertain nowadays, I think I'll give Crowbar's products a miss.

Nic Cicutti was this week voted journalist of the year for national newspapers in the Scottish Life Pensions Awards.

MONEY MAKEOVER

A steady take-off for high-flyers

THE MAKEOVER

Names: Sharon Newman
Age: 24
Occupation: Cabin crew member at British Airways

The Problem: Sharon and her partner Andy have just bought their first home near her work. Now that much of the process, involving legal fees and other expenses are out of the way, she and Andy want to get things back on an even keel, start to plan their finances, calculate their incomes and outgoings and prepare for any future needs.

The Advice: Don't do things on an individual basis. See retirement planning in conjunction with investment, protection and every other issue.

Sharon and Andy, a self-employed shop-fitter, have just moved in together in their home a few miles from Heathrow Airport. They have a joint income of around £42,000 and Sharon feels now is the time to sit down and organise her financial affairs.

She originally found it difficult to obtain a mortgage because more than half her total income is made up of bonuses, shift and overseas allowances, and because of Andy's self-employed status. Eventually Halifax stepped in with a rate of 7.35 per cent fixed for five years. While this may not be the cheapest around, it carries no redemption penalties, allowing early repayment of the loan, or compulsory insurance purchases, which usually add at least 0.25 percentage point to the cost of a mortgage.

The couple both have pensions in place - Andy through Friends Provident, and Sharon is a member of BA's occupational scheme and also makes top-up payments into the company's Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme. The Adviser: Andrew Hunt, independent financial adviser at Maddison Monetary Management, with branches nationwide. Call freephone: 0800 074 2233.

The Advice: Now the mortgage is up and running, Sharon and Andy need to ensure that they set up an appropriate cash flow management system, in order to understand how their income

and expenditure match up. In order to manage their cash flow effectively they will need to calculate their average monthly net income. As this is variable, they should monitor their expenditure in detail, by keeping a record of how much they spend in specific areas and ensuring that at the beginning of each month they transfer the required amount into a "household budget account". Whatever is left over is their disposable income.

Another fundamental of any financial plan is that of a cash reserve, an account that can be accessed at short notice to cater for any emergencies or opportunities that may arise. An amount equal to three months' expenditure is recommended, although some people may feel this is insufficient, depending on circumstances.

Sharon has already opened a Postal Account to house her cash reserve. These are ideal for cash reserves and for holding money for short-term objectives. Some of the best rates available on instant access accounts include Safeway Bank (yes, the supermarket), which is offering 7.4 per cent gross interest on balances in excess of £2,500, and Northern Rock, offering 7.85 per cent on deposits of over £10,000.

Once Sharon knows her current financial position is in order, she should consider medium- to long-term issues, including protection, retirement and investment objectives.

Protection is important particularly because Sharon and Andy have just taken on a mortgage. Whilst their mortgage has been protected against death, they need to consider protection in the event of long-term illness or disability.

The main form of "disability insurance", Permanent Health Insurance (PHI), pays out a tax-free monthly income in the event of the insured being unable to work through almost any accident or illness.

Increasing demand, as insurers see a rise in claims over the coming years, means premiums are likely to rise. So it is important to choose a provider that guarantees to keep premi-



Savings build-up: Sharon Newman should consider funds that invest in Europe

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

ums level throughout the life of the plan, such as Canada Life, Zurich Life or Swiss Life.

Although Sharon is only 24, she should also consider retirement planning. She is a member of BA's pension scheme. By the scheme retirement age of 55 (for cabin crew) she will have accrued a gross annual pension of approximately 56 per cent of her basic salary.

Sharon should therefore be looking to boost her pension income through Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), either through her employer or through a private arrangement. In-house AVCs can be beneficial in that the employer may match contributions and/or pay some of the attached charges. But a

Free-Standing arrangement provides choice and flexibility.

Sharon is currently paying AVCs with British Airways but should consider her options fully when deciding to increase these. If she were to effect a Free-Standing arrangement she should consider a provider who will allow the flexibility to vary contributions without heavy penalties, for example if she were to take time out to start a family. Leading providers of such flexible plans include Scottish Widows and Commercial Union. Andy, being self-employed, has a Personal Pension Plan with Friends Provident.

Sharon's main interest is rebuilding her savings. She is considering investing in another

or PEP for the current tax year, which is also the last that PEPs will be sold, and is prepared to take a higher than average risk with her long-term savings.

Sharon may therefore wish to consider funds that invest in Europe or even maximising the 25 per cent of her PEP allowance which can be invested outside the EC.

An ideal PEP for this purpose is the Skandia MultiPep, which offers access to 75 funds through 17 different fund managers across all sectors of the market.

With the MultiPep, one can switch between funds at very little cost, thereby giving greater investment flexibility and control over the longer term. However, the annual management

fee incurred on the MultiPep is high, involving both a fee to Skandia and a separate one to the fund manager, totalling an average of 2.5 per cent a year. If a MultiPep were to be used, it should be accompanied by regular reviews to determine the need for switching from one fund to another. Otherwise the extra costs might outweigh the benefits of flexibility.

If you are interested in having a free financial makeover, please write to Andy Verity, Free Financial Makeover, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL. You must be willing for your picture and financial details to appear in the paper.

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The Product: Scottish Life Secure Investment Portfolio

The Deal: Scottish Life, the Edinburgh-based insurer, is offering an offshore investment bond through its Isle of Man subsidiary.

The bond can be divided into 100 individual policies for ease of enactment, with minimum investments per policy of £500. However, the minimum initial investment is £15,000.

The bond invests in a range of tracker funds, including Japan, where it is linked to the performance of the Nikkei 225 index, the UK and the US share indexes. There is also a cash fund investing in offshore deposit accounts.

Investors can define the extent of risk they are prepared to accept, limiting losses in any one quarter to between 1 and 5 per cent of capital invested.

They can also define the proportion of their investment in each fund.

Cash withdrawals of 5 per cent or less are not considered as income and can be made free of tax.

Withdrawals of up to 10 per cent of capital may be made without penalty from Scottish Life.

Switches may be made between funds without capital gains liabilities. Annual loyalty bonuses of 1 per cent are attached to the investment after the fifth year.

Plus Points: This is a more sophisticated variant of typical offshore investment bonds. It offers a range of bells and whistles that may make it attractive to sophisticated investors and those with specific financial planning needs that require them to place a proportion of their funds offshore for the time being.

The investment grows free of tax, which is only paid at full encashment. The capital protection, which guarantees the original sum invested, plus the absence of a time limit on the investment, mean that it is possible to wait for a good moment to sell up, rather than have a forced maturity of the investment.

Drawbacks and Risks: The charges are extremely heavy - 8 per cent of the fund's value, deducted monthly over the first five years of the investment, plus a further 1.25 per cent annual management charge, and potential penalties for early encashment.

For most investors, this type of fund is slightly over the top. Guarantees of this sort are available onshore, with PEPability (and future ISABILITY) on sums of £5,000-£6,000 a year, more than enough for most needs.

Marks out of Five: Four for clever design, two for charges and meeting typical financial needs.

- Nic Cicutti

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Focus in on vintage prints before they fade from view

Collect to Invest:
Museums and
Americans are
snapping up classic
photographs, warns
John Windsor

It may seem an unlikely comparison, but vintage photographs are a bit like Italian primitive paintings. There was a time when such paintings could be collected in armfuls. Then they were all gone.

The international market for photographs is still young, dating only from the mid Seventies. But scarce prints are fast disappearing into museums and the collections of rich Americans. The last chance to snap them up is now.

The blockbuster prices are for 20th century photographs. Collect historic 19th century prints if you must. But twentieth century prices are rising fastest and the market's preferences for names and images have not altered much over the past few years.

This makes investment simpler - although the range of quality, from numbered and signed "lifetime" editions to "later printings", run off by goodness knows whom, goodness knows when, is a perpetual nightmare for those lacking an eye for the subtleties of tone.

Front runners, price-wise, are Stieglitz, Kertész and Man Ray.

The American Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) pioneered a direct, truthful "pure photography" and set standards of technical excellence, especially in portraiture. His portrait of the hands of his companion and inspiration, Georgia O'Keeffe - one of nine known prints, seven in museums and one in private hands - set a world record for a photograph of \$398,500 (£250,000) at Christie's New York that has lasted since 1993.

André Kertész (1894-1985), a Hungarian, emigrated to the United States in the Thirties, where he photographed for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Last year his photograph of Mondrian's pipe and glasses fetched \$376,500 at Christie's New York.

Five of the top 10 auction prices for photographs are for the work of the American Man Ray (1890-1976), who lived among the surrealists of Paris for most of his life.

There is solid demand for these top three, whose work is sold almost exclusively in New York. Even the second string - Edward Weston, Alexander Rodchenko and Edward Steichen - can fetch over \$100,000.

Buyers in London should consider the favourite images of Bill Brandt (1904-1983), who was briefly Man Ray's assistant and went on to document British life with a surreal eye. There is a rising demand for characteristic images of his, such as his untitled nude of 1952.

One "printed later" is estimated £2,000-£3,000 in Sotheby's London sale next Thursday (10.30am). Another later printing of the same image made \$2,860 (£1,790) at Christie's New York in 1990. In 1986, Sotheby's sold one of un-



specified printing for a mere £770. Nobody knows how many copies of the nude were printed. They are hardly perennials at auction, but repeated exposure seems to be making them more and more famous and boosting their value.

The same investment principle applies to other well-known images, such as Brandt's picture of a disgruntled parlour maid and under-parlourmaid about to serve dinner in 1933, which sells for around £5,000, and the legendary French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson's portrait, Rue Mouffetard, showing a boy proudly carrying home two bottles of wine, in Paris in 1958, worth around £3,500.

Few 19th century images have acquired such a valuable cachet. Among the exceptions is Robert Howlett's stunning portrait of Brunel standing in front of the launching chains of the Great Eastern in 1857.

Sotheby's expects £1,000-£1,500 for a copy in Thursday's sale. The print lacks tonal range. The astonishing £22,000 paid for the same image in 1987 demonstrates the importance of condition.

The numbering and signing of editions may seem to be a reliable way of determining rarity value. But Sotheby's expects only £400-£600 for one of an edition of 10 signed prints of Bob Carlos Clarke's fetishistic nude "Nadia/Black Rope" (1991), whereas Robert Frank's "Chicago" (1955-57) - not a limited edition but known to be a rarity - is estimated £3,000-£5,000.

Sotheby's photographs, Thursday (10.30am), 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-293 5000). Christie's South Kensington, fine and rare photographs, Friday (11am), 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 (0171-581 7611).

Good exposure: No one knows how many copies of Bill Brandt's 1952 untitled nude (above) were printed, but the more they appear at auction the more the value rises. The print of Brunel in 1857 (right) is estimated £1,500. A better quality print sold in 1987 for £22,000



INTERNET INVESTOR



ROBIN AMLÔT

Cut out the
paperwork on
your bank
accounts and
tax returns

Prior to Gordon Brown's March Budget, capital gains tax (CGT) was a fiendishly complicated, expensive to operate tax which raised only a few hundred million pounds for the Inland Revenue and only affected a small proportion of the population.

Following the Budget reform of CGT, it is still a fiendishly complicated, expensive to operate tax which raises only a few hundred million pounds for the Inland Revenue and only affects a small proportion of the population.

If you don't believe me about how complicated CGT has become, ask an accountant. Last month, a meeting of tax experts, accountants and city fund managers concluded that the Finance Bill's proposals make CGT so complex that it would be impossible to write software capable of calculating tax liabilities.

As taxpayers, we can only hope that the confusion the Chancellor has succeeded in creating is resolved as soon as possible. However, it is not a problem most of us will have to worry about. The "joys" of the self-assessment tax return provide enough headaches.

Help with your tax return is one of the facilities available in Microsoft Money 98 Financial Suite, which is locked in battle with Intuit's Quicken for supremacy in the personal financial management field. Money's Tax Estimator will help you to prepare for submitting your tax return.

Money 98 has an online facility which you can access directly through the program and includes Money Manager, a database of articles and information about personal finance.

It may be difficult for most consumers to choose between Money 98 and its competitor from Intuit, Quicken, when deciding which software to use to manage their finances. However, one group of computer users does not have this problem - those artistic types who use Apple Macintosh computers since neither program will run on the Mac operating system.

One area in which Microsoft's program appears to be setting the pace over Quicken is in online banking. Barclays Bank, Nationwide Building Society and Royal Bank

of Scotland have all developed online banking systems based on Microsoft Money 98.

In addition, NatWest Bank's online banking service, which goes live later this year, will also work with Microsoft Money and Royal Bank has launched a complete PC banking and money management package specifically designed for small businesses. Royline Account Master, which is linked to Money 98.

A recent survey by NOP for Barclays Bank showed that more than a third of us with computers at home spend more time in front of the PC than the TV, which leads me to the inescapable conclusion that we all need to get out more.

However, Barclays does claim to be adding 5,000 customers every month to its PC Banking service. Set up in April 1997, in its first year of operation Barclays' PC Banking gained 43,500 customers. Nationwide claims 50,000 customers for its own online service.

In fact, personal financial management at the basic level of organising one's own bank account is likely to be one of the big selling factors in getting more people into computer stores and on to the internet over the course of the next couple of years. Barclays' survey shows 82 per cent of people believing that banking via a PC will become increasingly popular in the future.

For example, the new bank Alliance & Leicester, after a year-long pilot scheme, will shortly follow Co-op Bank and offer all its customers the option of an online facility. Lloyds TSB is also working on an online facility and asking customers to register their interest in taking part in its trials on the bank's website.

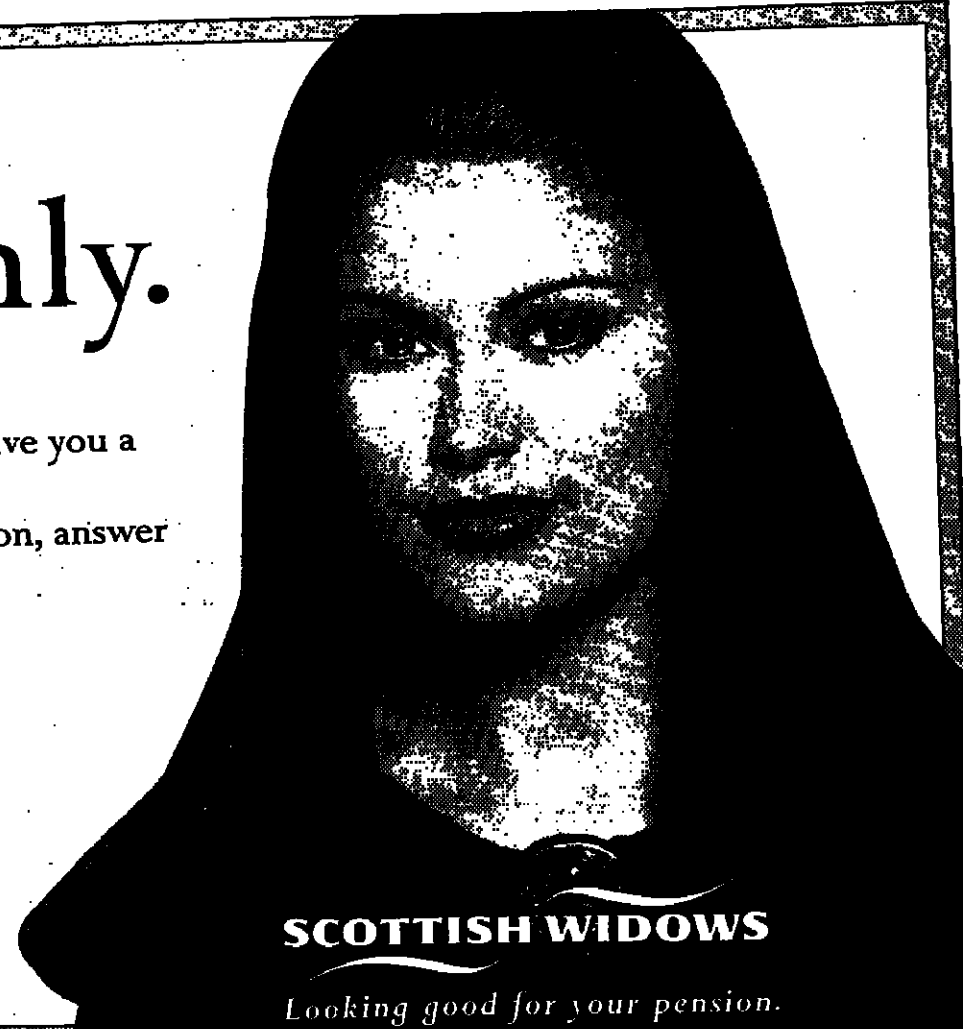
The phrase "high street bank" has already had something of a hollow ring for much of the 1990s with all the big institutions cutting staff numbers, closing branches and reducing their street presence. The current rush to offer online services could sound its death knell. What should replace it? "E-street bank?"

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LOOSE CHANGE

Chase de Vere, the mortgage broker, is offering five-year fixed loans for "Buy-to-Let" properties, pegged at 6.95 per cent until June 2003. The minimum loan is £75,000 and the maximum is £500,000, at up to 80 per cent of a home's value. Redemption penalties are three months' interest for the first six years. The lender will, however, charge a 1 per cent fee, to be added to the cost of the loan. Call 0171-930 7242.

Eagle Star Direct is offering travel insurance over the internet. The cover offers 24-hour e-mail and phone support. Customers can obtain information about the cover and buy it online. Policies available include cover for individuals and couples, for single trips or annually. Website address: www.eaglestardirect.co.uk

Alliance & Leicester is offering capped-rate mortgages, where the loan is guaranteed not to rise above 6.25 per cent until 2002, on loans up to 75 per cent of a home's value. If mortgage rates should fall, the cost of the loans would also drop by the same amount. Alliance & Leicester is also offering a refund of valuation fees and a £250 cashback on applications received before 30 May. Redemption penalties of six months' gross interest are applied on part or full repayments before July 2005. An extra three months is applied on redemptions in the first two years. Call 0845 3033000.

Mercury Asset Management is extending its 2 per cent discount on lump sum investments into its personal equity plan (PEP) funds until the end of the PEP season in April 1999. Including its Income Fund, British Blue Chip Fund and European Growth Fund. Call 0800 445522.

Leeds & Holbeck is offering a new fixed-rate bond, maturing on 30 June 2000,

paying 7.5 per cent gross on investments above £25,000. Deposits up to £9,999 will earn 7 per cent gross. Monthly income options are also available. One emergency withdrawal of up to 25 per cent of depositors' cash may be made. Call 0500 225777.

Islamic Investment Banking Unit (IIBU), part of the United Bank of Kuwait, is improving the terms for Manzil, the home purchase plan conforming to the principles of Islam. The Banking Unit is reducing its profit margin on transactions, which it says would give buyers savings of up to £40 a month on a 15-year Manzil for a home valued at £80,000. Under the terms of the loan, the IIBU buys the property from the vendor and sells it on to the buyer, bypassing the need for usury. The cost of the home, when it is sold, reflects additional admin expenses plus a profit made by IIBU on the sale. Call 0171-487 6626.

Western Provident Association is launching a new level of health and healthcare cover, Rowan, aimed at filling the gap between its Oak and Cedar policies. Rowan covers in-patient treatment, some scans, and radio/chemotherapy. Payments are also made towards some types of outpatient care. Typical premiums for a 25-year-old male, living in London, would be £342 a year. A family of four in Taunton would pay £751. Call 0500 414243.

Furness Building Society has launched a five-year fixed-rate mortgage pegged at 6.5 per cent for loans worth 80 per cent or less of a home's value. The loan includes unemployment cover, backdated to the first day, for the first 12 months. An early repayment fee of 5 per cent of the loan applies. Interest is calculated monthly. Call 0800 834312.

BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Max amt	Fee	Incentive
MORTGAGES				
FIXED RATES				
Scarborough BS	0800 133140	0.05% for 1 year	95%	0.75% FreeMHP for rate up to 80%
FirstMortgage	0800 080088	5.40% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 805 0500	5.85% to 1.8.01	95%	£250 No MHP for rate up to 80%
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Scarborough BS	0800 133140	1.50% for 1 year	85%	£250
FirstMortgage	0800 080088	4.44% to 30.6.01	75%	£250
Northern Rock	0845 805 0500	5.55% to 1.8.01	95%	Refund rate
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES				
Northern Rock	0845 805 0500	5.85% to 1.8.01	95%	£300 No MHP for rate up to 80%
Hallam	0800 101110	5.75% to 31.8.01	95%	£195 No high lending fee (MHP)
Midwest BS	0800 303010	6.15% for 5 years	90%	£250 No high lending fee
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Westfield	0845 757575	5.70% for 1 year	95%	£195 2.5% of advance interest
FirstMortgage	0800 080088	5.55% to 30.6.01	95%	£250
Midwest BS	0800 303010	6.85% for 5 years	95%	Refund of rate fee
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS				
Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £5K over 5 yrs	With insurance	Without insurance
UNSECURED				
Northern Rock	0845 421421	8.9% H	£188.13	£188.11
Yanville Bank	0800 232122	12.5%	£180.33	£185.77
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.5% A	£185.75	£185.38
SECURED LOANS (SECURED CHARGES)				
Telephone	APR	Max LTV Advance	Term	
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	5.7%	Reg	£5K to £15K 6 months to 25 years
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	75%	£2.5K to £10K 3 years to 10 years
First Direct	0845 101103	11.2%	80%	£5K to Reg Up to 40 years
OVERDRAFTS				
Telephone	Account	Authorised	Unauthorised	
Alliance & Leicester	0500 999995	Alliance	% per APR	% per APR
Bank of Scotland Direct	0500 804004	Direct charges	0.80% 12.00% 2.20% 25.0%	
Midwest BS	0800 303010	Fluorocarbon	1.0% 11.0% 20.0%	
			1.50% 12.2% 2.10% 25.2%	
CREDIT CARDS				
Telephone	Card Type	Rate	APR	Annual fee (per £1K)
Capital One Bank	0800 588000	Visa	0.50% to 0.80% H	£4 days
RBS Advance	0800 077770	Visa	0.50% H	£5 days
Co-operative Bank	0800 150000	Advantage Visa	0.50% H	£0 days
GOLD CARDS				
Capital One Bank	0800 588000	Visa	0.50% to 0.80% H	£4 days £20K
Co-operative Bank	0845 212121	Rate Visa	0.50% H	£5 days £20K
RBS Advance	0800 077770	Visa	0.50% H	£5 days £20K
STORE CARDS				
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods		
John Lewis	Visa store	1.30% 18.0%	1.30% 18.0%	
Blue	Visa store	1.50% 20.0%	2.15% 20.0%	
Marks & Spencer	01244 881881	1.57% 20.2%	2.07% 27.2%	
A - Mileplus age 22 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers				
APR - Annualised percentage rate				
ASU - Accident, sickness and unemployment insurance				
B+C - Buildings and contents insurance				
H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged				
LTV - Loan to value				
MHP - Mortgage indemnity premium				
N - Introductory rate for a limited period				
U - Unemployment insurance				
* If completion is before 30.4.98				
All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01682 500677 30 April 1998				

BEST SAVINGS RATES

	Telephone number	Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS						
Clydesdale Bank	0800 445225	Savings	Instant	£1	6.75%	City
Westfield	0800 222220	City Street	Instant	£50	5.50%	Year
Standard & London BS	0845 413858	Branch Instant	Instant	£100	5.00%	Year
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 233777	Penetration Access	Instant	£5,000	7.00%	Year
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS						
Standard Life Bank	0845 555557	Direct Access	Instant (T)	£1	5.95%	Year
Scottish Widows Bank	0845 845 0029	Instant Access	Instant (S)	£100	7.00%	Year
Barclays	0800 899995	Direct Savings	Instant (S)	£1,000	7.00%	Year
Northern Rock	0845 805 0787	Share Direct Instant	Instant (S)	£5,000	7.50%	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS						
Scarborough BS	01723 500016	Scarborough 30	30 Day	£1,000	7.00%	Year
Legal & General Bank	0800 111200	50 Direct 4	60 Day (S)	£10,000	8.00%	Year
Flex National BS	0800 659444	50 Day Notice	90 Day (S)	£500	7.25%	Year
Investec Bank (UK)	0171 333 1650	Share Plus	1 Year	£2,001	8.00%	Year
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS						
Investec Bank (UK)	0171 333 1650	HCA 5000	Instant	£5,000	6.45%	Month
Cheltenham BS	0800 429429	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000	5.50%	City
Leeds BS	0800 429429	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	5.75%	Year
Lapport Joseph	0171 588 2323	Instant Access	Instant	£10,000	6.75%	Year
FIXED RATE BONDS						
Norwich/Peterborough	01733 372222	Fixed Rate Bond	6 Month	£5,000	7.55% F	Monthly
Shropshire BS	01588 622000	Fixed Rate Bond	10.5.98	£1,000	7.80% F	Monthly
Wolverhampton BS	0500 330910	Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	£1	7.40% F	Monthly
Portman BS	0800 807080	Branch Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	£500	7.50% F	Monthly
FIRST TESSAS						
Westfield/Peterborough	01733 372222	Preference TESSA	5 Year	£100	8.00%	Year
Standard & Lloyds BS	0800 382588	TESSA 2 Flex	5 Year	£500	8.00%	Year
Derbyshire BS	01323 372222	TESSA 2 Flex	5 Year	£1,000	8.00%	Year
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Derbyshire BS	01323 372222	TESSA 2 Flex	5 Year	£1,000	8.00%	Year
Derbyshire BS	01323 372222	TESSA 2 Flex	5 Year	£1,000	8	

A reversal of fortunes for managed funds



THE
JONATHAN
DAVIS
COLUMN

Unit trusts now outsell them by a large margin and money is actually flowing out of the sector. So could it be time for a revival of investment trusts?

Is the tide in the troubled investment trust sector at last starting to turn? It seems a good moment to ask the question, as it is now four years since the sector peaked in an orgy of new issues and some rather wild claims that trusts had solved their discount problem once and for all.

As so often happens, the launch of the most successful new issues ever seen marked the exact high point in the market. Since then, discounts have widened, the investment trust

sector has fallen out of favour and the optimists have deserted the field in favour of the professional Cassandras predicting - as they have done so often before - the final demise of this venerable institution.

Two statistics measure the sector's fall from favour. One is that, rather than flowing in, money actually flowed out of the sector for the first time in several years. The second was that unit trusts had their best ever year, outselling investment trusts by a large margin.

In fact, according to the stockbroker Crédit Lyonnais Securities, in their just published *Annual Investment Trust Year Book*, it was only in 1982 that unit trusts first matched investment trusts for funds under management. Now unit trusts have three times as much money invested with them as their older rivals. It looks like game, set and match to the unit trust business.

The other big irony is, that while it was the unit trust business which experienced the worst fund management scandal of recent years (the Peter Young débâcle at Morgan Grenfell European in 1996, who managed to cost his employers more than £300m in compensation to aggrieved investors), it is the investment trust sector which finds itself at the centre of the corporate governance and/or investment protection debate.

The wave of restructuring, fund manager changes and unitisations which has swept through the investment trust industry in the last year is a testament to the power that shareholders can wield over underperforming fund management groups. Yet who can remember the last time that anyone was able to persuade a lacklustre unit trust group into changing its ways? Shareholder power may not have amounted to much in the past, as far as investment trusts were concerned, but they do at least have some of it.

So can the sector win back the ground it has lost? Peter Walls, the Crédit Lyonnais analyst, is one who thinks that it may be possible to see better times ahead.

Given that he was one of the first to warn that the good times of 1992 to 1994 could not last, his view that improvement may be on the way deserves notice. He is right to point out that investment trusts have many other things going for them - lower costs, and greater flexibility to name but two - if only the fund manager groups can get their act together and recognise the real demand for change in the way they operate.

All the main groups are now jumping on the shareholder-



Market madness: Peter Young cost his employers more than £300m

value bandwagon and are moving to end the most obvious abuses, such as multi-year management contracts and trust boards that are packed with place men.

The Chancellor's abolition of advance corporation tax (ACT) in last year's Budget may ironically be a godsend to the investment trust industry, as it makes it much easier to organise tax-efficient buy-back schemes which Mr Walls and others see as typical mechanisms for eliminating the discount and volatility which is the sector's Achilles' heel in marketing terms.

The value of share buy-backs is that they should put a

floor under the average investment trust discount. Discounts have already narrowed slightly from their low point last year, and Mr Walls believes there is scope for the average discounts to fall to around 8 to 9 per cent.

That will be a disappointment to bargain hunters, who see discounts as a buying opportunity rather than an inherent defect of investment trusts, but it should do something at least to level the competitive playing field against the all-conquering unit trusts.

Unit trusts have many virtues, but it remains a mystery why they can get away with charging quite so much more

than investment trusts - both in up-front costs and annual management fees - and still wipe the floor with the competition.

Selling commissions to intermediaries is clearly one reason, and it is interesting to note that Rod Birkett, who runs Fleming Trust Management, argues that investment trusts should raise their fees to allow them to pay commissions to independent financial advisers and other intermediaries.

That is a brave idea, but my sense is that growing consumer awareness will eventually lead investors to start seeing the attractions of investment trusts once more.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET

Take stocks for the long term

In the last column in this series, John Andrew summarises the main factors to examine when investing in shares

thumb, the minimum should be at least six months' expenditure.

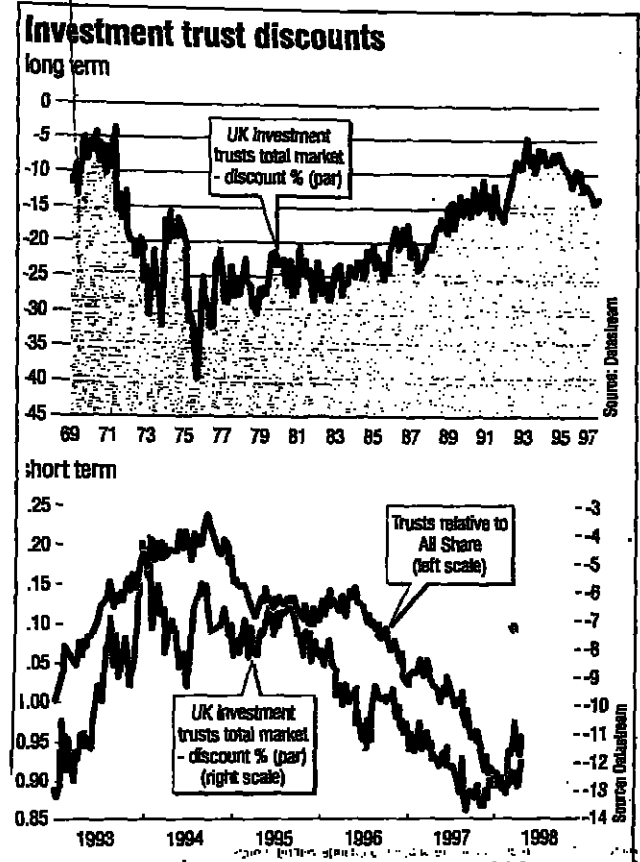
It is also essential to review your attitude towards risk and evaluate the level of funds that you want to invest in the stock market. If you have a sizeable lump sum, seek guidance from a broker. However, if you will be investing surplus funds as and when they arise, you can turn your investment into a pastime.

It is important to remember that it is not a game. Any investment in shares must be viewed as a medium to long-term investment - this means for at least five years. Of course, changes in one company's circumstances may make switching to another with better prospects worthwhile. But, generally, it is only over time that investments will absorb dealing costs. Hiccups in the market also tend to have less impact the longer the investment is held.

The second point is to spread your risk. Opinions differ as to the ideal number of companies in which a private investor should hold shares. Some say 10, others as many as 20. ProShare's chief, Gill Nott, recommends: "As a very general rule, you should aim to have shares of at least six different companies in your portfolio at any one time. It is wise to buy shares in a number of different companies in different sectors, so if one share or sector performs badly, this will be balanced by the performance of the others."

The third point to remember is that share investment is not an end in itself. Keep abreast of the financial news and monitor the progress of your shares. If you become a real enthusiast, you may decide to keep files of cuttings not only in those companies in which you have investments, but those in which you are considering investing.

Finally, keep records. Retain contact notes, dividend tax vouchers and the other details you will need to complete your tax returns. Following the stock market can be an absorbing and profitable pastime. Hopefully, it will be so for you.



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Fittingly, the Trust has earned its fair share of plaudits: a five star rating by Micropal, a triple A rating by Standard and Poor's Fund Research Ltd and a 1998 What Pep award.

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Eliminate rogue figures from the pension hunt

In theory, charges on life and pension products can be checked exactly. But even the experts can still be confused. Janet Walford has a cautionary tale

For the last three years, following a change in the regulations, it has been possible for consumers to check exactly what insurance companies are charging for their life and pensions products.

That's the theory at least, but it is no easy task for the layman. In fact, even the experts are sometimes hoodwinked by the less venerable practices of some insurance companies.

Money Management magazine, which carries in-depth surveys of complex financial products, aims to make comparisons of charges and performance an easy task. In compiling tables on charges and performance, it relies to a large extent on the veracity of the participants.

The magazine is used to spotting rogue figures that crop up now and then. But its best endeavours can be made useless when faced with cynical manipulation of its surveys by some companies, which choose to ignore instructions about what should be taken into account when compiling figures for the surveys.

For example, a recent *Money Management* survey compared the cost of flexibility on personal pensions. Its purpose was to show what happened when someone took out a 25-year personal pension, in all good faith, but finds that his circumstances subsequently change unexpectedly, forcing him to revise his original intentions -

which is exactly what happens to many people in real life.

In the survey, companies were asked for figures showing what would happen to this 25-year personal pension where contributions of £100 per month were stopped after two years and the £2,400 paid in was left invested until the original maturity date.

Allied Dunbar, a life insurance company, provided a figure of £13,588, which placed it firmly in the top quarter of the 45 participants. The magazine carefully checked this figure before it went to print, as Allied Dunbar is not known to be particularly competitive in this sort of scenario. But repeated assurances were given that the figure was indeed correct.

It transpired, however, that Allied Dunbar had not followed the instructions in the questionnaire when it compiled the figure. Instead of basing its figure on a 25-year plan that was stopped unexpectedly after two years, it assumed that the client knew at the outset that he would only want the plan for two years, and based its figure on a short-term plan which had much lower charges.

In actual fact the correct figure should have been zero - the charges for starting up and running the plan were so high that, even at a growth rate of 9 per cent per annum over 25 years, the £2,400-worth of contributions paid in were totally

exhausted. The correct figure would have put Allied Dunbar firmly at the bottom of the table of 45 companies.

This just goes to show how difficult it can be to make comparisons between products. If you are thinking of buying a personal pension, you should always get quotes from two or three companies to allow you to make a comparison (or, better still, get an independent adviser to do it for you).

Provided you ask for a quotation for exactly the same thing, you should get figures that allow you to compare charges on an equal basis. The effect of charges is shown in the "key features" document which every company must send you when you buy, for example, a personal pension.

But when insurance companies take part in published surveys they are aware that their figures will be compared with many other product providers, not just two or three, and that the results will be read not only by professional advisers and consumers but by the national press and the regulators too. So appearing well in them can mean a lot.

Sometimes the wording in questionnaires sent to product providers by various enquirers leaves a lot to be desired and the insurance companies have to spend a lot of time trying to interpret what is required. This survey, however, was tightly worded and certainly left no



The devil's in the details. Asking the right questions can save you a lot of money over the long term.

doubt in the minds of the other 44 participants.

The worrying point of this whole sorry saga is that if policies were less complex in the first place people would not need to be constantly on their guard against getting wrong or misleading information. Nowadays, all pension plans claim to be flexible - but too many of them only allow flexibility at huge cost.

All too often this is not made clear by the company's sales representative at the outset. In most cases, policies sold by the direct salesforce of an insurance company cost more than those brought through an independent adviser or direct by telephone.

Allied Dunbar, like many other insurance companies, sells its products mainly through

its own 4,000-strong salesforce. Such salespeople can only tell you about their own products and will obviously want to show them in the best possible light to persuade you to buy.

The moral of this story is clear - if you are considering buying a personal pension plan, and you think that your circumstances may change in the future, you need to ask the salesman more than just whether the plan is flexible. The answer to that simple question will most likely be yes. What you also need to ask is: "What is the cost of this flexibility?" Forgetting to ask that question could end of costing you dear - over £13,000 in the case of Allied Dunbar.

Janet Walford is editor of *Money Management* magazine

Key features - the full monty or how disclosure could be improved

The last four columns assume investment growth of 9% a year.

The early years

WARNING - If you transfer in the early years, the value of your fund could be less than what you have paid in. Our latest persistency figures indicate that 20% of our planholders stop paying premiums by year 3

At end of year	Total paid in to date	Growth of total paid in, if there were no charges	Effect of deductions to date	What the transfer value might be	Rate of return with that value
	£	£	£	£	%
1	2,400	2,510	1,190	1,350	56.0
2	4,800	5,250	1,820	3,430	28.0
3	7,200	8,240	2,080	6,220	15.0
4	9,600	11,500	2,300	9,200	2.0
5	12,000	15,040	2,740	12,300	9.0

The later years

10	24,000	38,170	6,400	31,800	+5.5
15	36,000	73,800	12,000	61,800	+5.5

What are the deductions for?

The deductions reflect a 5% initial charge on payments in, and a 1.6% annual charge on the accumulated funds. There is also a 24 a month policy fee, which increases with inflation.

The columns indicate how invested premiums are reduced by these deductions to some transfer values. The deductions also bring the investment growth used from 9% a year down to negative returns in the early years, when transfer values are less than payments in. At year 5 the deductions bring growth down from 9% to 1% a year. Thereafter the projected % returns steadily increase.

Illustration of projected returns and ABC ratings

15 year plans, premiums £200 per month, investment growth 9% pa

Company	2 yrs. £	5 yrs. £	15 yrs. £	2 yrs. %	5 yrs. %	15 yrs. %	ABC ratings
Virgin	6,147	14,486	67,474	8.8	7.4	8.0	A++A++
Equitable	5,048	14,347	66,358	4.9	7.1	8.1	A++A++
Standard Life	4,834	13,123	61,548	8.3	8.5	8.8	ABC
Nat West	3,603	12,419	62,358	25.1	1.3	7.1	BBB
Norwich Union	3,380	12,080	63,557	30.0	0.8	7.2	BBB
Allied Dunbar	2,886	11,768	64,283	41.4	0.7	7.3	BBB
J Rothschild	2,784	11,348	60,560	43.7	2.1	6.5	CCC
Black Horse	2,547	11,348	60,540	49.5	1.0	6.5	CCC

Come to terms with

Confused? That could be the aim of some pension providers' literature. Nic Cicutti cuts through the jargon

Getting to grips with financial products means wading through reams of incomprehensible gobbledegook. It is hard not to conclude that much of the language is deliberately employed to baffle policyholders: typically, they only learn the true meaning of certain terms when the clauses containing them are used against them.

Here is a handy guide to explain some of the jargon that appears in these two pages and when discussing common financial products. Capital or initial units: When you invest in a policy, the money typically buys units which rise and fall according to investment performance. The "initial", or misleadingly named "capital", units are those that apply in the first year or two of a policy being

taken out. They involve higher charges of up to 5 or 6 per cent a year. No matter how long you keep a policy going and how low charges may fall on subsequent years' units, they will continue to remain high on those first units. With-profits policies: This is where an annual bonus is attached to a policy and cannot be taken away. At maturity, a "terminal" bonus is also attached, which can form up to 60 per cent of the entire policy's final value. The aim of this strategy is to "smooth" stock market ups and downs.

Unit-linked policies: These match direct stock market performance more closely. They may deliver higher performance but also involve investors taking more risks in the short term. Disclosure regime: In 1995, companies were forced for the first time to provide their clients with details of how much would be taken out of a policy in charges, including commission, and what the effect of this would be on the value of their policy at certain key moments in its life. Disclosure is supposed to be policed by the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), the financial watchdog. But the

regime has come under increasing fire for being confusing and for failing to ensure that companies cut some of the more outrageous charges. Transfer or surrender value: If you halt contributions into a personal pension you cannot as for the money back. A transfer, therefore, is when you decide to switch a policy from one provider to another and it involves the original provider setting a "value" on the amount you can move over. This transfer value is affected by last minute company charges, which may be hefty.

Surrenders, on the other hand, are possible for policies such as with-profits endowments that are linked to mortgages. Again, the amount paid at the moment of surrender is likely to be affected by heavy initial charges. It is also likely to be low because very little maturity value is attached to it. Generally, if it must be disposed of, as long as a policy has been held for more than seven years it makes sense to sell it instead of surrendering it. There are several companies specialising in this market. Paid-up value: If you cannot

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How to avoid hidden charges

The current disclosure regime has failed to protect consumers. John Chapman explains how some simple changes could work

High-charging and poor-value pension plans and endowments are still being sold in their hundreds of thousands to the unknowing British public. A third of pension plan holders make losses or very poor returns on these vital savings.

The industry runs up almost unlimited costs in competing to sell policies, which are then passed on to plan holders through a variety of charges. The Consumers' Association has referred to the "euphemisms and obscure language used to disguise charges".

The industry itself agrees. A leading pensions handbook refers to the use of "capital" or "initial units", present in a quarter of pension plans, as "invidious", as "the only reason for having them is so the plan holder will not realise what the charges are".

Yet the watchdog supposedly there to oversee the industry takes a far laxer approach. In its recent report on product charges, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) merely describes them as "many, different and subtle".

The charges were meant to end with the so-called "disclosure regime" introduced in 1995. This involved companies being forced to tell consumers how much was being taken in commission and other fees from the plans they were selling. But the impact of this new regime has been very limited.

All the PIA can report is a marginal improvement in early "transfer or surrender values". These are the terms given to describe the value of a product - such as a pension or an endowment - at the moment when it is switched from one company or another, or when a punter tries to cash it in. An improvement in these values would mean customers were getting a better deal.

Yet the PIA's claim that it may be responsible for this better deal is open to question.

In fact, research shows that trend began earlier, with the publication of a report on surrender values by the Office of Fair Trading claim at least a year earlier.

In practice, the costly disclosure regime that is now in place has failed. Clients are still uninformed about which are low-charge and high-charge products. The problem lies with the "key features" document - an example of which is shown on this page - handed to all clients at the moment when they buy a policy. This document fails to alert them adequately to the poor value in many policies.

The key features document is difficult to understand and there appears to be no connection between the figures it shows. For example, what is the difference between actual deductions and the effect of deductions? How are the transfer values derived?

Second, the most revealing bits have been censored. There is no indication of the appalling rates of return in the early and, indeed, mid-years of many policies. Instead, the only "projected rate of return" - the amount a plan will be worth - indicated is the most favourable one, at maturity, which only a minority of plan holders reach - a misleading practice indeed.

Third, the health warning about stopping early is half-hearted. No use is made of the poor "persistence rates" which are now known. This term describes the percentage figure of the number of people who let their policies lapse after a few years. On average, about 20 per cent of pension plans lapse by year two and 30 per cent by year three, reflecting poor selling and changes in personal circumstances.

Making things clearer would be easy. It would be possible to do so by subtly changing the key features document already shown, by delivering more information. The introduction of a "growth with no charges"

column to give a logical link between the columns is supported by many insurance company actuaries.

Some might argue that consumers might be put off by tables showing they might receive a negative return. They should be. Where high early lapse rates occur, with poor early returns, consumers should realise that they could be the next to lose on their savings.

Even if a key features document were improved in the manner described, it would still be necessary to have a rating system so that consumers know of the good value products.

The Consumers' Association and industry thinkers have recently called for such a system.

I suggested in late 1995 an ABC rating system at three different stages of plans, and this has been used for the last two years by *Money Marketing*, a specialist magazine. To show the ABC system applied to the rates of return in the "Full Monty" disclosure table, I have taken a sample from an analysis based on a survey of 48 pension plans by another magazine, *Money Management*. If consumers followed such ratings, charges would plummet.



Cold comfort: Key features documents, brought in by the pension watchdog to make buying a pension easier, have still left many people confused about the value of their savings
Photograph: John Giles/PA

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Typical key features document

The early years
WARNING - If you transfer early, the value of your fund could be less than what you have paid in. The last two columns assume investment growth of 9% a year.

At end of year	Total paid in to date £s	Total actual deductions to date £s	Effect of deductions to date, £s	What the transfer value might be, £s
----------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

1	2,400	1,198	1,198	1,350
2	4,800	1,710	1,710	3,430
3	7,200	2,750	2,750	6,220
4	9,600	3,870	3,870	9,200
5	12,000	4,990	4,990	12,300

The later years

10	24,000	9,980	9,980	31,800
15	36,000	14,970	14,970	61,800

What are the deductions for?
The deductions include commission and expenses. The effect of total deductions could amount to £12,000. Putting it another way, this would have the same effect as bringing the investment growth used from 9.0% a year to 6.8% a year.

encash a personal pension and do not want to transfer it, the only other option is to leave it "paid-up". This way it will remain invested by the original provider and will be paid out at the agreed maturity date.

One problem may be that charges involved in leaving a policy paid up may outweigh the heavy cost of transfer. It always pays to consult an independent financial adviser on the relative merits of either strategy.

Key features document: There are two stages involved in handing information to the client. The first, at the point of sale, is when non-specific information about a policy is handed over. This allows for rough comparisons between one policy and another.

Information about charges that are specific to that client and the wording of the policy are sent to investors as part of "key features" document. The client should have 14 days in which to cancel a policy if he or she wants to.

Projected rate of return: Companies pitching for custom are allowed by regulators to assume certain rates of growth

for their policies. This should not be taken to mean that a policy will deliver those returns: it is purely a device that should then allow clients to see what effect charges will have on a range of policies, assuming the same rate of growth for all of them.

Persistence rates: These refer to the percentage of people who decide to keep paying premiums into a policy rather than let it lapse. Thanks to rules demanded by the new disclosure regime, the rates are now officially calculated at the end of one, two and three years.

As more statistics come in it will be possible to know what happens several years down the line. At present, almost one quarter of policies bought from salespeople are lapsed within the first two years.

Tax relief: This is granted to personal pension contributions at the "marginal", or higher rate of tax paid. In effect, if you make a contribution of £100 into a pension, the taxman will pay £23 of that amount. If you are on the 40 per cent tax band, a further 17 per cent can be reclaimed from the Revenue.

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Penny Jackson finds that not everything in the garden is roses

It's not easy to sell the view from a spanking new house if the only thing to be seen is the trunk of a 20 ft maple tree. But where once builders might have reached for the chainsaw, they are now choosing spades and cranes.

In a two-day operation, Berkeley Homes this week employed a team of tree specialists to move the maple from its position perched high on an island of soil just a few metres away from one of five houses being built in Warrford, Hampshire.

It was dug up with an 8 ft root ball, put in a cradle and lifted by crane to the next plot. It now resides grandly in a position where it can be admired by everyone albeit at a cost of about £3,000. Gone are the days when a bit of turf and a few shrubs with potential were enough and landscaping was a useful way of grassing over piles of builder's rubble.

Buyers who now expect to walk into a home complete in every detail are not prepared to wait five years for a garden to grow. They want the miracle of instant maturity. One day a new house is standing in a garden that looks more like a ploughed field and the next it is turfed, paved and planted with trees and shrubs that are years older than the building itself.

For the developer, this means making the most of natural surroundings and where conservationists and planners may



Tree planting is not what it once was: now more likely to be a 20ft maple than a tiny seedling

Photograph: John Lawrence

have failed, the expectations of buyers have a more potent effect. Berkeley Homes, like other house-builders, knows the value in sales of creating a "green" atmosphere. It made its name in leafy, semi-rural locations and landscapers are among the first on site to draw up schedules of remedial work or fresh planting.

Civic Trees, which moved the Hampshire maple, has seen the spending on trees increase in recent years and not just from development companies. Householders are becoming aware that they can buy large trees and plant them with success.

"In London, our main problem is one

of access", says Ken Sneddon, managing director of the firm, based in Tring, Hertfordshire. "We had to lift a nine-metre-high, four-ton copper beech over a four-storey house, as that was the only way into the garden. The crane blocked the road for a day and it cost the owner £25,000. But if you want an instant 30-year-old tree there is no choice. We sometimes have to dissuade people from the more lunatic schemes."

Even those who buy in a rural setting are tempted to improve on nature. A large cedar planted in front of a house as a focal point will turn a large garden into something akin to a park. But, says Mr Sneddon,

a great deal of his work involves screening out the neighbours as quickly as possible. "Much-maligned, large leylandii planted in the right place do have their uses," he adds.

Apart from the unfortunate few who find that a neighbour's investment grows into a hedge about as attractive as the Berlin Wall, everyone living nearby stands to gain.

Alan Gottschalk, regional director of Black Horse Agencies, has seen a house in his street transformed by ambitious planting. "Until the owner put in large trees and bushes it was very unattractive. Now it has a lovely outlook. People are prepared to

spend a great deal on their gardens so that they look established. A woman who bought a big house in Surrey with a garden that was too bare for her paid tens of thousands of pounds to put in 20ft and 30 ft trees, large rhododendrons and a mass of mature shrubs."

At Mount Vernon in Hampstead, north London, they are waiting for the delivery of 20ft Italian oaks to complete the gardens. Bill Broadbent, managing director of Marylebone Warwick Balfour, who is developing the old hospital, went out to Italy with landscape architects to choose the trees himself.

He found himself south of Pisa, in a fertile valley that had been a huge lake in the 16th century. "I could hand-pick an avenue of trees and also found cone-shaped yews huge at seven years old that would have taken 15 years to grow in England. Trees will grow to 60ft or 70ft in 10 years there because of the nutrients in the soil and the warm summers."

"We are spending a good quarter of a million pounds on the gardens, but when people are paying £1.5m on an apartment, you can't expect them to wait for the garden to mature."

But when it's a matter of historic sites, there are obvious constraints. At Peninsular Barracks in Winchester, the much-praised gardens were created following the original 17th century plans. English Heritage plays a part in such reconstructions and has been involved at every stage with the Walled Garden, a development at Burton Park in Sussex.

This is the most complicated landscaping yet undertaken by McAlpine Homes, which within the old walls has planted up a replica of the original 19th century garden for sole use of the owners in the adjoining houses. On a personal scale, the bespoke service offered to buyers of new dwellings is gradually moving outdoors.

Wates has a garden design service to meet requests for seating areas, dog runs, water pools, arbors, irrigation systems or simply a vegetable plot. It involves a team of specialists and is priced individually.

Starting off with the perfect garden can still lead to disappointment. Ken Turner who runs Coblands in Kent, a wholesale nursery, says he is amazed by how many people ask for plants or trees of a certain size but stipulate that they mustn't get any bigger. Designer plants clearly have no business growing.

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Widening the Net

The garden fence may be a thing of the past, as you start to swap gossip and useful local information with your neighbours via your PC. By Andrew Mylius

Computers are rapidly becoming a normal item of domestic hardware, with five million Britons able to access the Internet. Next year, the number will be more than eight million. The virtual landscape of the Net has recently started to deliver functions people - normal ones - actually want. And in so doing, it looks set to change the way we live. Professor Andrew Graham of Balliol College, Oxford, who is researching the subject, says: "There is absolutely no doubt that e-mail will be used by everybody. It will be a normal way to exchange information". But e-mail is merely the tip of the iceberg.

The information and communications technology (ICT) revolution looks set to be slow but steady. A range of easy-to-use applications with the relevance of e-mail still needs to develop. At Microsoft, Ruth Bradshaw says that, having cornered the market in business-sector software, the American megahit is now focusing on the home market.

Amazingly, there has been no systematic research into how people actually use the Net at home, but now an experiment run by Microsoft in Islington, London (being monitored by the Economic and Social Research Council) gives some clues as to how ICT could affect us.

Under the name MSN Street, a community of 23 houses - 60 people - went on-line 12 months ago. People who already worked from home swiftly found the Net improved their business communication. Others started to bring work home,

which meant they had to go to the office less.

ICT has, like it or not, started to change the ways people work - where they do it, when, and how. However, not everyone wanted a home-office. Microsoft group marketing manager Oliver Roll describes the Internet as "every library in the world, but without an index and without a librarian to help you". Overwhelming.

MSN Street tackled this by creating a local area network that was relevant to the street's residents. The street's virtual bulletin board became a site for neighbours to exchange information about local services, shops and restaurants; people organised babysitting, children asked for help with homework; last year someone urged everybody to catch a glimpse of comet Hale-Bopp.

Very swiftly, a new social-technological ecology started to emerge. "Sometimes it's taken me years to speak to people", says Janet White, who has lived in the street for 10 years. "They have to give birth or have puppies before you find whatever it is that is going to make you say the first thing."

As a forum for common needs and concerns - for a plumber or reliable window cleaner, a spate of burglaries, the route of the Channel Tunnel rail link, and a campaign against grey squirrels - the Internet has become a meeting place. "A fear was that people would become withdrawn. They will now come over and talk if I'm in the garden," Pearson Phillips, a resident, remarks.

The Islington experiment is



Neighbours in an experiment in north London, a virtual bulletin board has linked people together who previously may not have spoken to each other for years

soon to be mirrored elsewhere. Millennium Village, to be built at Greenwich, will treat IT as a household service and an intrinsic part of the local community. Nick Thompson, director of the Integer (intelligent, green housing) research project, predicts that each home will be a "node" in a global web, but will also be part of a local area network.

This will make it possible not only for people to work from home and set up local business, it could also revolutionise the way care for children and the aged works. Home shopping and delivery could enable far longer independence and by connecting to local clinics and the emergency services ICT will usher in telemedicine and improve household safety.

Integral to the design of Millennium Village is a communal car pool. Maintained by

a company like Hertz, this would enable a dramatic reduction in private car ownership. Additionally, councils or housing associations will be able to communicate with residents about maintenance and repairs, and billing for gas or electricity can be done via a key-board. (Earlier this month Islington council launched 11 access points to enable residents without PCs access to its services via the Net.)

An idea common to several new developments is a "tele-services centre" - an IT forum that will provide technological back-up, social space and the kinds of hardware that people do not want at home. Design consultant Tony Rowe observes: "One of the problems is technology moves all the time. New technology is always expensive. Organisations that employ a lot of people can afford it."

Individuals, more often than

not, can't. Clive Wilding, managing director of Gleasons homes division, says there will probably be communally managed areas at up-and-coming projects in Sheffield, Reading and Cowisdon, Surrey. Following the trend set in modern offices, the centres will provide flexible space and equipment that can be booked according to users' needs.

With communal space meeting demand for a formal office environment, the house can be left as a home. At MSN Street, computer users have slotted them into living rooms and bedrooms much as they do a telephone or television. But Wilding says: "We feel the nature of work has changed sufficiently to change houses."

All Gleasons' houses are smart-wired with an ISDN socket in each room, and each has dual planning consent for

office and residential use. However, "the majority of people don't like to be isolated in a family house. The idea of a separate study isn't important."

At *Building Homes* magazine, editor David Birkbeck says: "The quiet corner will need to be the nicest part of the house and I suspect it will be full of light. A house of the future will definitely have a corner of that quality because that's where people will be chained. It's the same in every workspace: people gravitate towards the windows. If you want birds, trees, or to watch your kids, you need big windows."

Whether it's for work, play or the day-to-day business of simply having and living in a house, it looks certain we will be getting very much more familiar with computers in the near future. It could be time to find a sunny window, log on, and get to know the neighbours.



PENNY JACKSON

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Imagine you have just been gazumped or your house sale has fallen through and on the way out of the estate agent's office after strong words you find a questionnaire asking how satisfied you are with the service.

Not much chance that unfortunate office is going to be nominated as estate agent of the year. But the 730 estate agents who put themselves forward for this year's competition had more faith in themselves and their clients.

More than 70 per cent of customers said they were delighted with the service they received. For the first time the findings of the beauty contest - the National Association of Estate Agents "Office of the Year Awards" in association with Nationwide Building Society - have been made public.

Mike Lazenby, of the Nationwide, says there has been a marked improvement in the quality of service around the country "although the improvement was less noticeable among London agents". While 93 per cent of sellers would recommend their agent, only 88 per cent of buyers were entirely happy, which bears out what many agents now feel - that the buyers deserve better.

When it comes to the more complicated world of letting and renting, overall satisfaction is less. But perhaps the true test comes not with a smooth sale but when problems occur and here only 40 per cent gave top marks to their agent, with a tenth only giving one or two points.

The winners who were selected after undercover customers put them through their paces were Black Horse Agencies - Parkinson Fairlie Robertson in Hayling Island, Hampshire for corporate sales; Jones and Redfern in Rhyl, Denbighshire in independent sales and JSC Lettings, Virginia Water, Surrey in the lettings and management sector.

Frustrated buyers with a million-odd pounds burning a hole in their pockets are resorting to purchasing a place only to knock it down and start again. Houses built in the 1920s and 1930s seem particular targets - spacious with land but out of date. In St George's Hill, Surrey, Knight Frank saw a dated property in 2.5 acres sell for more than £1m to make way for a "mansion" of 11,000 sq ft.

And emerging from the dust of a farmhouse-style family home in Blackhills, an exclusive private road in Esher, will be another luxury mansion house. On the Crown Estate in Oxshott, nine properties ranging in price from £600,000 to £800,000 were bought purely for plot value.

While in Hampstead, London, Glentree Estates has sold a house for more than £2m to someone who intends to pull it down. It was on the market for two years. Trevor Abrahamson says the rebuilding may not cost a lot more than major refurbishment since no one knows what they will find. Nor is there, of course, any VAT payable on new build.

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Parque Del Sol	Tenerife	31, 32	Red	4	£1800
Comer Country Club	England	Float	White	4	£1800
Club Costa Sol	Lanzarote	12	Red	4	£1800
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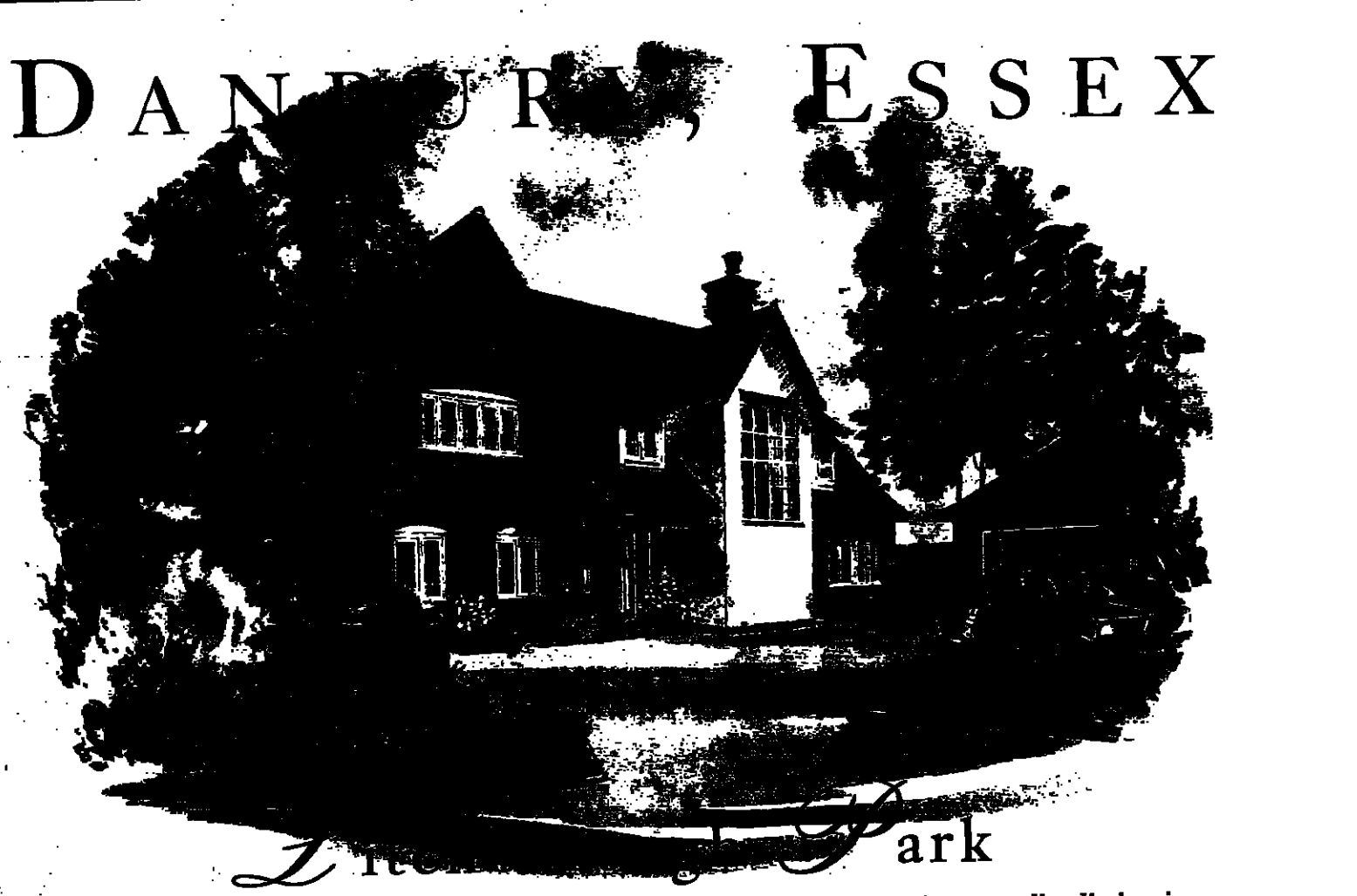
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Rydon Homes

To advertise in this section please call the PROPERTY team on 0171 293 2302.

Waxing luminous

Candles mean warmth and romance, indoors and out, all year round. Rosalind Russell finds some trendy examples to light up your spring

It used to be considered socially naff to light candles for a dinner party. Shades of melon balls, Hyacinth Bucket and suburban pretensions. But now candles are selling by the bale. And although it would be impossible (and probably heretical) to prove, judging by the amount in the shops, more church candles burn in private homes than under ecclesiastical roofs.

The reason could be the diversity of design in candle holders which has seen a recent significant updating of image. And they have grown taller. Almost every major store now stocks floorstanding wrought-iron candelabra as part of a contemporary furnishing collection. Like cream sofas, they're a dinky (double income, no kids) accessory, presenting too much of a challenge to small children and boisterous dogs.

Prices cover most budgets, from chain store to designer label.

Next Home catalogue offers a three-arm floorstanding candelabra 42 inches high, in black or gold for £29.99. It's the same price as Pukka Palace's mail-order tripod candle holder, 50 inches high and wrought in pewter-finish metal and which

can also be wired as a standard lamp.

The Iron Design Company makes two floor-standing models to accompany its range of wrought-iron furniture. Hand-made in a traditional forge in North Yorkshire, the three-candle stand costs £95 and the four-candle stand is £125. The firm accepts commissions, so if your ideas run to something even grander, they will oblige. Like several other designers, they also make a candle-holding chandelier, price £155, which is wildly romantic... in theory.

Unless you are careful to wedge the candles in firmly and upright - and out of a draught - you could end up getting an eyebrow wax as you eat. You'll also need long arms and a candle snuffer. Pukka Palace's candle chandelier costs £49.95.

A candle in the wind is best shielded by a glass case, which makes glass bell-jar lamps a practical alternative. Pukka Palace does two, both Victorian in style: a clear glass-etched bell jar at £65 and a hand-painted version, sporting pears and bunches of grapes, at £45. Its melon-glass lamps, in green, light blue and dark blue, are jolly, at £38 each.

Wireworks, launched six years ago by designer Anna Albright, sells contemporary accessories through stores such as the Conran Shop and Heal's. The range includes a smart candleholder enclosed in a semi-opaque box to diffuse the light (£35.50). Also very pretty are the chrome-stand candle holders with beaded lampshades from Debenhams. They come in white, lilac, gold and dark blue and cost £20.

Cheaper and very cheerful is the Homebase collection of candles and holders which can be used indoors or out. A gar-

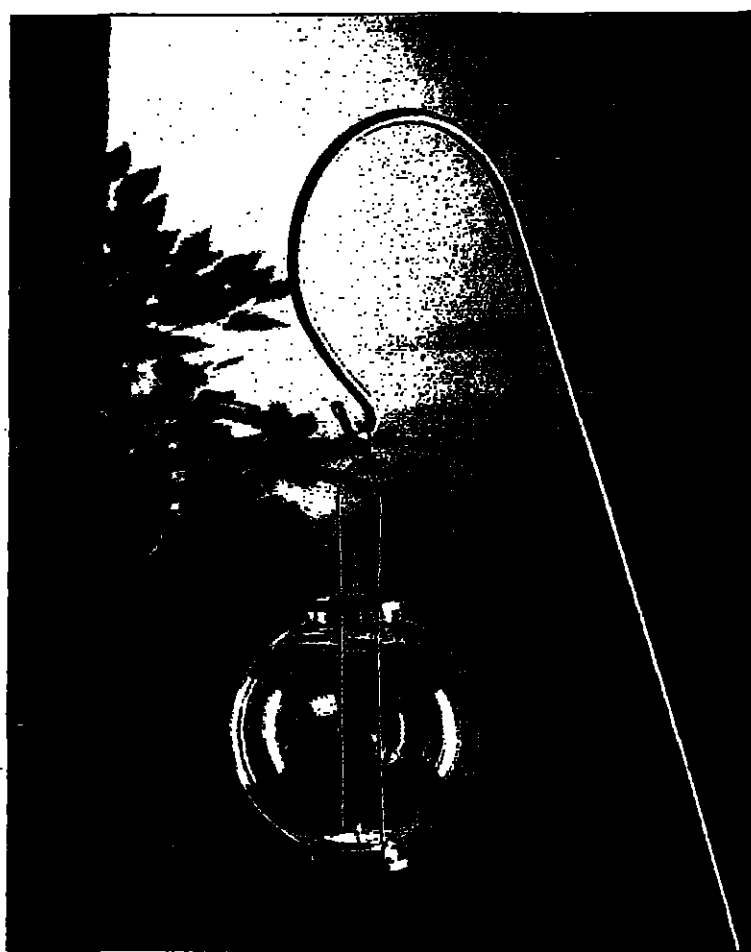
den-gate-style chrome lantern with cut-out shapes around the roof and a fence design around the base is just £9.99, or there are cauldron-shaped glass-bowl candles with curly feet at £6.99 each.

If you really don't care what the neighbours think about your taste, you can buy Homebase's garden-gnome candles, dressed in Cool Britannia sunhat and sunglasses (£7.99). Just the gnome for the Dome.

For more understated elegance, the Klint range of candle holders from Ocean is smart enough to be used on the dining table or on a white wall. They are very simple, with the clean appearance of steel and glass and come in four sizes, from wall candle-holder to the 40-inch high garden holder which has a long ground spike.

One of the most stylish outdoor candle holders comes from garden mail-order company, Windrush. Almost everything in their brochure is irresistible to the hopelessly addicted garden-centre freak; one of the more unusual items is the shepherd's-crook lamp. The painted steel crook stands 49 inches tall; the pointed end sticks firmly in the garden while the crook supports a 10-inch-wide glass lamp. Planted in a bed of tall white osteospermum, or pale green scented nicotiana, the night light would reflect a soft glow on a summer's night. All for £29.95.

Contacts: Next Home (0345 100 500); Pukka Palace (0345 666 666); Iron Design Company (01609 778846); Wireworks (0171-724 8850); Debenhams (0171-408 4444); Homebase (0645 801800); Ocean (0800 132 985); Windrush Mill (01993 770456).



Candle in the wind: the shepherd's-crook lantern (above) from Windrush and Wireworks' semi-opaque candle box (right) can throw some light on your garden without danger of being snuffed out



THREE TO VIEW: WITH SPRING BLOSSOM

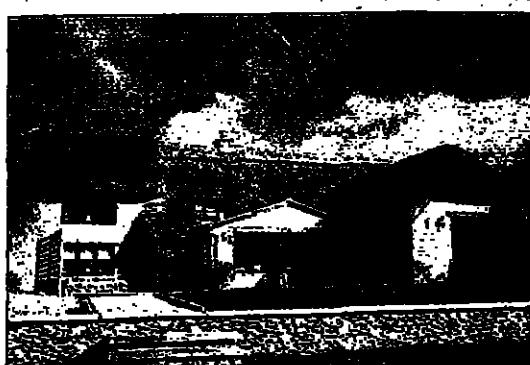
Pear Tree Cottage in Colyton, three-and-a-half miles from the sea in Devon, is a two-bedroom thatched house with very large cottage gardens, including a wild garden. Views across the Axe Valley can be seen from the top of the gardens. There is an 18ft sitting room with stone-built inglenook-style fireplace, 12ft kitchen, breakfast room and outside, a single garage. The town sits by the River Coly and consists mostly of period houses and cottages like this one. Perfect for a weekend home, there is a rail connection to London via Axminster. £90,000 through Alder King (01297 21595).



Walnut Tree House in Pulborough, West Sussex, really does have a walnut tree in the garden, along with a magnolia, wisteria, winter flowering jasmine and forsythia. The Grade II listed period house is in the centre of the village and has a long driveway at the back, leading to two garages. From the drawing room, there are views across the water meadows to the South Downs. The 18ft kitchen has fitted white units and Whitpool oven and hob. With five bedrooms, two bathrooms and an old cellar with curved ceiling, it's for sale for £255,000 through Guy Leonard & Co (01798 874033).



Apple Tree Cottage near Castle Combe in Wiltshire has large rear gardens with terraces, lawns and well established trees. The thatched, stone-built three-bedroom house has two reception rooms, including a marble-floored summer lounge with French doors opening onto the patio. The 23ft drawing room has exposed stone walling and inglenook fireplace. The kitchen is custom built with a Rosières cooking range. The main bathroom is a splendid affair with a generous free-standing oval bath on claw feet and brass telephone taps. All for £350,000 through Parkinson Fairlie Robertson (01249 655101).



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